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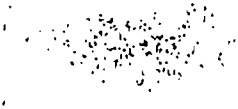

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developed themselves dislocated all the existing machinery of society, disturbed its very framework, and must necessarily produce, as they have produced, a considerable amount of confusion and suffering until the difficult task of re-adjustment is completed. A giant forcing his way into a densely-wedged crowd extends pain and disturbance to its remotest extremity: the individuals he pushes aside push others in their turn, though none know the cause of pressure save those with whom the intruder is immediately in contact; and thus also the Factory system causes its presence to be felt in districts where no manufactures are established: all classes are pressed to make room for the stranger, and all are interested in knowing something of what is thus forced upon their acquaintance. Antecedent to any inquiry it would be well to recognise the Factory system as what statesmen call *un fait accompli;* it exists, and must continue to exist; it is not practicable, even if it were desirable, to get rid of it; millions of human beings depend upon the Factories for their daily bread,—were there heads sufficiently bold and hearts sufficiently hard to propose their extermination, where are the hands by which the sanguinary decree could be executed ?*

* " Be machinery and its concomitants a good, an evil, or, like most other things pertaining to humanity, a mingled web of good and ill together, its existence is a matter of fact, it is an institution rooted in our civilization, a step made in a path, that admits of no retrogradation. It is not merely, what the author has called it, " *un fait accompli;*" it is a fact that carries with it an indefinite

It would be absurd to speak of Factories as mere abstractions, and consider them apart from the manufacturing population:—that population is a stern reality, and cannot be neglected with impunity. As a stranger passes through the masses of human beings which have been accumulated round the mills and print-works in this and the neighbouring towns, he cannot contemplate these "crowded hives" without feelings of anxiety and apprehension almost amounting to dismay. The population, like the system to which it belongs, is NEW; but it is hourly increasing in breadth and strength. It is an aggregate of masses, our conceptions of which clothe themselves in terms that express something portentous and fearful. We speak not of them indeed as of sudden convulsions, tempestuous seas, or furious hurricanes, but as of the slow rising and gradual swelling of an ocean which must, at some future and no distant time, bear all the elements of society aloft upon its bosom, and float them—Heaven knows whither. There are mighty energies slumbering in those masses: had our ancestors witnessed the assemblage of such a multitude as is poured forth every evening from the mills of Union Street, magistrates would have assembled, special constables would have been sworn, the riot act read,

series of consequences, which cannot be resisted; which, by wisdom, forecast, and honesty, may be directed to national greatness and the increase of human happiness, even to the furthermost ends of the world; but which, if neglected or disregarded, will become pregnant with the deepest calamity."—*Athenæum.*

the military called out, and most probably some fatal collision would have taken place. The crowd now scarcely attracts the notice of a passing policeman, but it is, nevertheless, a crowd, and therefore susceptible of the passions which may animate a multitude.*

The most striking phenomenon of the Factory system is, the amount of population which it has suddenly accumulated on certain points: there has been long a continuous influx of operatives into the manufacturing districts from other parts of Britain; these men have very speedily laid aside all their old habits and associations, to assume those of the mass in which they are mingled. The manufacturing population is not new in its formation alone: it is new in its habits of thought and action, which have been formed by the circumstances of its condition, with little instruction, and less guidance, from external sources. It may be matter of question whether the circumstances surrounding the manufacturing labourer are better or worse than those belonging to the agricultural condi-

* "This passage—at the moment we are writing so painfully illustrated—is in itself a sufficient demonstration of the folly put forth about arresting the march of manufacture, and returning the people to agricultural occupations. But who was ever the dupe of such propositions? Not those who put them forth,—not any one, gentle or simple, whose reason was not perverted by the corrupted logic of ill-understood self-interests. Still the proposition has been pressed on public attention with confidence, and the implied possibility, having been suffered to creep unperceived into argument, has operated powerfully to lead to the falsest conclusions."—*Athenæum*, August 20.

tion, but there can be no doubt that the former are preferred by the operative. In the present severe pressure of commercial distress there are scores, and probably hundreds, of workmen, whom the authorities would gladly send back to their parishes if they could bring them legally under the designation of paupers, but these men submit to the pressure of hunger, and all its attendant sufferings, with an iron endurance which nothing can bend, rather than be carried back to an agricultural district. However severe the condition of the manufacturing operative may be, there is a something behind which he dreads more: he clings to his new state with desperate fidelity, and faces famine rather than return to the farm. The Factory system is, therefore, preferred to the more usual conditions of labour by the population which it employs, and this at once ensures its permanence as a formative element of society, and at the same time renders its influence directly efficacious on character.

I have visited Manchester at seasons when trade was pre-eminently prosperous: I see it now suffering under severe and unprecedented distress; and I have been very forcibly struck by observing the little change which the altered circumstances have produced in the moral aspect of the population. Agricultural distress soon makes itself known; Swing at this side of the water, and Rock at the other, write the tales of their grievances in characters which no man can mistake, and seek redress by measures strongly marked

with the insanity of despair. But suffering here has not loosened the bands of confidence; millions of property remain at the mercy of a rusty nail or the ashes of a tobacco-pipe, and yet no one feels alarm for the safety of his stock or machinery, though in case of an operative *Jacquerie* they could not be defended by all the military force of England. This very crisis has been a rigid test of the strength of the Factory system, and precludes the necessity of any further argument to show that it cannot be overthrown.

Without detaining you any longer by these general remarks, I shall proceed to examine the social condition of Manchester, which may be considered as the metropolis of the cotton manufacture. No person, however casual a visitor, can for a moment mistake the character of the town. It is essentially a place of business, where pleasure is unknown as a pursuit, and amusements scarcely rank as secondary considerations. Every person who passes you in the street has the look of thought and the step of haste. Few private carriages are to be seen; there is only one street of handsome shops, and that is of modern date; there are some very stately public buildings, but only one of them is dedicated to recreation, the rest are devoted to religion, charity, science, or business. A modern author has started the theory, that, as certain insects assume the colours and marks of the leaves on which they feed, so the citizens of certain towns offer

whimsical analogies to the character of the place in which they dwell. This is to a considerable extent true of Manchester. The men are as businesslike as the place, and in their character a zeal for religion, charity, and science is not less conspicuous than the buildings consecrated to these objects are in the town. I might adduce as proofs the subscriptions to the fund for building churches, to the Methodist Centenary Fund, to the funds for relieving the citizens of Hamburgh, for erecting the Lancashire Independent College, for supporting the numerous literary and scientific institutions in the town and its neighbourhood; nor will gratitude permit me to omit the hospitable and magnificent reception given to the members of the British Association at its late meeting in Manchester, though the visit was paid at a season of general depression and great commercial distress.

Were I asked how a stranger could best form a notion of the character of the Manchester manufacturers, I should recommend him to visit the Exchange of Manchester at the period of "high change;" that is, about noon on a Tuesday. It is the parliament of the lords of cotton—their legislative assembly—which enacts laws as immutable as those of the Medes and Persians, but, unlike every other parliament in the world, very much is done and very little is said. Nowhere can there be found so practical a comment on the well-known line,—

Silence that speaks, and eloquence of eyes.

Transactions of immense extent are conducted by nods, winks, shrugs, or brief phrases, compared to which the laconisms of the ancient Spartans were specimens of tediousness and verbosity. There is a kind of vague tradition, or rather remote recollection, that a man was once seen to gossip on the Exchange: it was mentioned in the terms one would use if he saw a saraband danced in St. Peter's, or Harlequin playing his antics at the Old Bailey. For my own part, I felt my loquacious tendencies so chilled by the genius of the place, that I deemed myself qualified to become a candidate for La Trappe.

The characteristic feature of the assembly is talent and intelligence in high working order; genius and stupidity appear to be equally absent; but if the average of intellect be not very high, it is evident that not a particle of it remains unemployed. It has been my fortune to visit this place in a season of great commercial prosperity and activity, and more recently at this period of stagnation and depression. On the first occasion, a stranger would imagine that he had got into one of those communities of dancing dervishes whose rule inculcates silence and perpetual motion. It seemed as if each man was incapable of remaining in the same spot for three continuous seconds: it is the principle of a Manchester man that "nought is done where aught remains to do:" let him have but the opportunity, and he will undertake to supply all the markets between Lima and

Pekin, and he will be exceedingly vexed if, by any oversight, he has omitted a petty village which could purchase a yard of cloth or a hank of yarn. The marks of Manchester manufacturers are as well known in Bokhara or Samarcand as in Liverpool or London, and its patterns guide taste equally under the burning sun of Africa and amid the snows of Siberia.

The aspect of the Exchange at this period of commercial distress is perfectly appalling: there is a settled gloom on every countenance, accompanied with a restlessness of eye quite out of keeping with the contracted brow and the compressed lip. Eagerness is changed into obstinacy; men seem to feel that their profits, if not their capitals, are slipping from their hands, and they have made up their minds to bear a certain amount of loss, but not to endure one fraction more. Whether trade be active or dull, "high change" lasts little more than an hour: after the clock strikes two the meeting gradually but noiselessly melts away, without your being very well able to account for the disappearance of the several forms: before three the building is as empty and deserted as one of the catacombs of Egypt.

I have been thus particular in describing the symptoms of commercial prosperity or commercial distress on the Exchange of Manchester, for I know of no other part of the town in which you can easily obtain certain indications of either the one or the other. Contrary to general belief, experience has shown me that

Manchester does not afford a fair specimen of the factory population in any of the conditions of its existence, and that the outward aspect of the place affords a very imperfect test of the state of trade in South Lancashire. It must, in the first place, be observed that there is always, and must necessarily be, considerable distress in a place where there is a large demand for untrained labour. Though the factories require skilled labour, yet there are many occupations connected with the commerce of cotton which only demand the exertion of brute strength; such, for instance, are porterage, lighterage, coal-heaving, &c. This demand for untrained labour is not so great as in Liverpool, nor could Manchester exhibit anything so low in the social scale as the dock-population of that port; still the demand exists to a considerable extent, and is mainly, if not entirely, supplied by immigrants from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and the English agricultural counties. In consequence of the rapidity of the growth of manufactures in Manchester, the increase of population very rapidly outstripped the means of accommodation; even the factory operatives are badly lodged, and the dwellings of the class below them are the most wretched that can be conceived. This is particularly the case in the township of Manchester: its narrow streets, its courts and cellars, have been abandoned to the poorest grade of all. There they live, hidden from the view of the higher ranks by

piles of stores, mills, warehouses, and manufacturing establishments, less known to their wealthy neighbours,—who reside chiefly in the open spaces of Cheetham, Broughton, and Chorlton,—than the inhabitants of New Zealand or Kamtschatka.

Your Grace is aware that to some extent Dublin is similarly divided into the city of the rich and the city of the poor; but I know that many respectable and wealthy manufacturers reside in the liberties of Dublin, while the smoke-nuisance drives everybody from the township of Manchester who can possibly find means of renting a house elsewhere. These conditions necessarily produce an unhealthy condition of society, both physically and morally. I find that in the township of Manchester the rate of mortality is so high as 1 in 30; and, making every allowance for the swelling of the number of deaths by aged and sickly immigration from the rural districts, this rate indicates a very large amount of misery and suffering arising from causes purely physical.

Another evil of fearful magnitude arises from this separation of Manchester into districts in which relative poverty and wealth form the demarkation of the frontiers. The rich lose sight of the poor, or only recognise them when attention is forced to their existence by their appearance as vagrants, mendicants, or delinquents. It is a very common error to attribute to the factories the evils which really arise from an immigrating and non-factory population; a

population, too, which has been recently increased by the great demand for unskilled labour produced by the works and excavations required for the new railways which are radiating on every side from Manchester. I took some pains to ascertain the character of this immigrating population, and I found it such as to account, in a very great degree, for the high rate of mortality and the low condition of morals in the township of Manchester. It appeared that peasants inadequate to the fatigues of rural toil frequently come into the towns with the hope of finding some light employment suited to their feeble strength, and that persons whose character is blighted in the country seek to escape notice in the crowd of the town. Having conversed with many of these persons, and also made inquiries from the guardians of the poor and the administrators of public charities, I am persuaded that Manchester must long continue to present an appearance of great destitution and delinquency which does not belong to the town itself, but arises from a class of immigrants and passengers.

Some years ago I was much struck by seeing it stated that 17,406 inmates were admitted into the Manchester Asylum for the Houseless Poor between February 1838 and February 1839. On inquiry, I found that they were chiefly persons passing through Manchester, or immigrants who had been attracted by the hope of immediately finding employment. The ac-

tual number of persons relieved was 9870; of these only 3500 belonged to Lancashire, while not less than 1700 were Irishmen. I am unable to state how many were actual natives or long residents in Manchester and its vicinity, but from my inquiries I should think that they were less than a tenth of the whole number. It follows that nine-tenths of Manchester destitution at that period, estimated by the very rigid test of inability to procure lodgings, arises from circumstances utterly unconnected with the locality. When perturbating causes of such enormous amount are in operation, it is sufficiently obvious that the condition of Manchester would afford a very erroneous test of the influence of factories on a population.

It gives me great pleasure to find that my views on this subject coincide with those of the Rev. Mr. Parkinson, the author of an admirable paper on the statistical antiquities of Manchester, derived from the Records of the Collegiate Church, which he read to the Statistical Section of the British Association. The ability, research, and acumen displayed in that paper give me a strong assurance of the value of his testimony in all matters of statistical inquiry, while the high estimation in which he is held by men of every party in Manchester sufficiently proves that he is not a man who would colour or garble statements to serve a purpose. Having inquired, at an annual

meeting of the subscribers to the Night Asylum, what proportion of the persons relieved came from the town or neighbourhood, and received for answer that a very small portion indeed came from those districts,—he made the following observations:—

"My reason for putting the questions which have been so satisfactorily answered, with reference to the proportion of applications from residents of this town and those from casual visitants, was, that, unless the statement were to go forth with some explanation, a handle would be made of it at a distance, and we should have persons exclaiming—'Look, what a miserable population they have in Manchester; no less than 17,000 of its poor inhabitants have been driven to ask for refuge at the Asylum for the Destitute!' It is important, therefore, that the statement should go forth that the institution is open, not merely to the inhabitants of this neighbourhood, but to all who seek for shelter therein; and that the proportion of strangers has hitherto far exceeded that of the population of our own neighbourhood. I was desirous, moreover, that the proportion should be specifically stated, because I believe that a feeling is becoming very prevalent elsewhere that there is something in the character of manufactures which is unnatural, and opposed to the will of God. Now I maintain that that state to which we are tending in manufactures is as much the will of God as agricultural pursuits. I am aware that an amiable and well-

known poet has said—and the saying has almost passed into a proverb—

"God made the country, but man made the town,"—

meaning, of course, that the country was the most proper place for man to dwell in, and that the occupations of town-life were unnatural. I think, on the contrary, that, instead of an agricultural population, the people of this country were meant to be one of a very different character. I have no national predilections for my present mode of thinking. My birth and early education put me in a very different position from the one in which I now am; but, being now an inhabitant of Manchester,—having had ample opportunity of observing and judging,—and being in a position where I can have no motive for a partial judgment, I maintain that, if we can strike an average of all classes of our population and the population of other districts, we shall find that the morality of this district will not be below that of the most primitive agricultural population. I have the authority of a high military officer, and also that of other persons, for saying that the streets of Manchester, at ten o'clock at night, are as retired as those of the most rural districts. When we look at the extent of this parish, containing at least 300,000 souls,—more than the population of the half of our counties,—can we be surprised that there is a great amount of immorality? But a great proportion of that immorality is committed by

those who have been already nursed in crime in districts of the country supposed to be more innocent than our own, and are, apparently, added to the number of those who swell our police reports, not so much because we hold out greater facilities in rearing them, as that they are apprehended through the superior vigilance of our police. I think it desirable that I should state this, as being an impartial observer, and one coming from a distant part of the country; and as I see gentlemen of the press here, I hope that my evidence may be recorded."

Influenced by these considerations, I resolved to delay my further examination of Manchester until I had visited some of the manufacturing districts where the influence of factories could be seen undisturbed by the perturbations of an immigrant and fluctuating population. And to this course I was influenced by another consideration. Until the present fearful shock checked the natural course of manufacturing development, Manchester was becoming daily more and more a commercial depôt, and losing its manufacturing character. I was therefore anxious to see whether any progress had been made to the formation of what I believe the most healthy condition of society, the union of manufacturing and agricultural industry in the same families, the members of which would have the opportunity of directing their energies to either employment, according to their taste and natural capabilities. I am bound in grati-

tude to add that, when my anxiety to obtain information on the subject was known, every possible facility was offered and afforded by the manufacturers and millowners. "All we wish is to be known: there is nothing in our entire system which we desire to be concealed," was the universal cry, and of the sincerity with which it was uttered I have received the most striking and convincing demonstrations.

LETTER II.

The Oaks, Turton, near Bolton.

How a painter would have enjoyed the sight which broke upon my waking eyes this morning! To my right is one of the tributaries to the Irwell, winding through the depths of a richly wooded and precipitous valley, or rather ravine; the sun's rays, glinting from the waters, come like flashes through every opening in the foliage, warning me that I have remained a laggard without being able to plead fatigue as an excuse,—it being now a settled maxim that nobody is to be tired from a journey by railway. Before me, at the extreme of the level on which I stand, and which I may describe as a promontory of table-land surrounded by valleys, is the Hall in the Wood, memorable for having been the residence of Crompton, the inventor of the spinning-jenny, and to me scarcely less interesting as one of the most perfect specimens remaining of the domestic architecture of our Saxon ancestors, and of their descendants the Franklins or old country gentlemen of England, who never bowed their head to the Norman yoke, and who refused to adopt the fashions imported from the Continent. Beyond is the hill on which a great part of the busy town of Bolton is built. The intervening

valley is studded with factories and bleach-works. Thank God, smoke is rising from the lofty chimneys of most of them! for I have not travelled thus far without learning, by many a painful illustration, that the absence of smoke from the factory-chimney indicates the quenching of the fire on many a domestic hearth, want of employment to many a willing labourer, and want of bread to many an honest family. The smoke too creates no nuisance here—the chimneys are too far apart; and it produces variations in the atmosphere and sky which, to me at least, have a pleasing and picturesque effect.

From this description every man in Lancashire will see that I am an inmate of the house of Mr. Henry Ashworth, and will pardon me for resolving not to say one syllable respecting him or his family. Were I to attempt to speak of them as they deserve, those who know them would exclaim that I had done injustice to their merits, and those who do not know them would accuse me of flattery. Both imputations are avoided by silence; and, so bestowing my heartiest benediction on the Oaks and its fine saplings, I will at once proceed to visit the mills of Turton and Egerton, which have deservedly gained a European reputation.

The Turton Mill is built in the bottom of the ravine, just under the owner's residence, from which, however, it is separated by the little stream I have already noticed. It is a plain stone building, but not without

some pretensions to architectural beauty. On descending to visit it, my attention was excited at the entrance by a very simple circumstance, which I think, not unworthy of record. Fruit-trees, unprotected by fence, railing, or palisade, are trained against the main wall of the building, and in the season the ripe fruit hangs temptingly within reach of every operative who goes in or out of the mill. There is not an instance of even a cherry having been plucked, though the young piecers and cleaners must pass them five or six times every day, and they are far from being deficient in the natural love for fruit, as I found that they were good customers to the itinerant hawkers. Mr. Ashworth's garden is on the side of the factory remote from the house: it is rich in fruits, flowers, and vegetables, but it is absolutely unprotected; a child could scramble through the hedge, and in my schoolboy days I would have thought little of clearing the gate in a leap: the gate, however, is only secured by a latch, and could not therefore exclude an infant. Now this unprotected garden has never suffered the slightest injury or depredation. I know of less tempting gardens secured by high walls, ponderous gates, and a regular apparatus of bolts, locks, and bars, to which man-traps and spring-guns were found necessary as an additional protection.*

* The 'Spectator,' in noticing the first edition of this work, denied that this anecdote afforded any proof of the high moral character of the operatives, asserting the probability of this for-

It is not necessary for me to describe the processes used in the cotton manufacture; I have already done so in a work entitled 'England in the Nineteenth Century'—a work, by the way, to which I have been a very limited contributor. My connection with it, indeed, extends no farther than to somewhere about the middle of the third number relating to Lancashire, and even with that portion was but partial. I take the opportunity of making this statement to save me for the future the trouble of disavowing sentiments for which I am not responsible, and reconciling contradictions of which I am not guilty.

The interior of Mr. Ashworth's mill does not differ materially from that of many other well-regulated mills which I have visited, such as Ashton's of Hyde, Taylor's of Preston, and a host of others. I was, however, pleased to find that great care had been bestowed upon the "boxing up" of dangerous ma-

bearance arising from a fear of dismissal. It is singular to find this unworthy insinuation in a journal which has so often proclaimed itself the advocate of "the working classes;" but I do not profess to explain the manifold inconsistencies of the 'Spectator.' It is more interesting to direct attention to a still stronger proof of the honour and honesty of the Lancashire operatives exhibited in the conduct of an excited multitude of strangers to these very fruit-trees. On Monday, August 15th, Turton mill was visited by a body of the turn-outs, the machinery stopped, and the workmen compelled to go home. But though the trees were loaded with fruit, and many of the multitude so exhausted that they went up to Mr. Ashworth's house craving for a morsel of bread, not a single pear was plucked, nor was any act of mischief done which could possibly be avoided.

chinery. I learned that accidents were very rare, and that, when they did occur, they were, as my own senses convinced me that they must have been, the result of the grossest negligence or of absolute wilfulness. I mention this circumstance because the burst of sentimental sympathy for the condition of the factory-operatives which, a few years ago, frightened the isle from its propriety, appealed largely to the number of accidents which happened from machinery, and I was myself for a time fool enough to believe that mills were places in which young children were, by some inexplicable process, ground—bones, flesh, and blood together—into yarn and printed calicoes. I remember very well when first I visited a cotton-mill feeling something like disappointment at not discovering the hoppers into which the infants were thrown. I have since found that such absurdity is only credited by those who, like myself at that period, could not tell the difference between a cotton-mill and a tread-mill. But a very little consideration should have taught me better: derangements of machinery are very expensive accidents to remedy; and if the mill-owners of Lancashire were as reckless of human life as the worst of their assailants have chosen to describe them, they certainly are not men likely to disregard their own pockets. I have had some opportunities of estimating the cost of accidents, and I know that the engineer's bill is considerably heavier than the surgeon's. Without at all giving mill-

owners credit for more than the average philanthropy of their countrymen, I am quite ready to repose confidence in their anxiety to prevent accidents, because their own obvious interests are a tolerably safe security for their humanity.

The conditions of health in the mills of Turton and Egerton, and I may add generally in all that I have examined, are exceedingly favourable. The working rooms are lofty, spacious, and well ventilated, kept at an equable temperature, and scrupulously clean. There is nothing in sight, sound, or smell to offend the most fastidious sense. So much space is occupied by the machinery that crowding is physically impossible. I should be very well contented to have as large a proportion of room and air in my own study as a cotton-spinner in any of the mills of Lancashire. With respect to the length of time during which the work is continued, I must remark that the toil is not very great, nor is it incessant. The heaviest part of the labour is executed by the steam-engine or the water-wheel; and there are so many intervals of rest, that I am under the mark when I assert that an operative in a cotton-factory is at rest one minute out of every three during the period of his nominal employment. On the other hand, these intervals of rest are brief and quick in their recurrence; they cannot therefore be turned to any useful account. Hence I should not be indisposed to give favourable consideration to a time-bill, if its advocates could show me

how the time of labour could be shortened without the amount of wages being reduced. Some of them no doubt will say, compel the employers to pay still the same amount of wages, because in all ages of the world that philanthropy has been fashionable which consists in being exceedingly generous at the expense of other people; but I should like to know by what process employers could be forced to pay a rate of wages disproportionate to their profits. I trust that those who use such arguments will acquit me of the heinous sin of political economy when I tell them that acts of parliament could no more control the rate of wages by direct agency than they could regulate the course of the winds or the flow of the tide. Indirectly, indeed, they can effect a great deal; they can close a market against the products of British industry by refusing to take the only payment which those who are eager to be purchasers have it in their power to offer, and, having thus turned off the customers, the authors of the mischief may turn to the piles of goods left in the warehouse, and console the disappointed proprietors with a schoolboy oration on over-production.

It happened that the Messrs. Ashworth had made a reduction of wages some short time before I visited their factories. I was anxious to know how this measure had been received by the persons in their employment; and I took the opportunity, which I found easy enough, of inquiring their opinions in the absence

of their employer and the overseers. They uniformly stated that Messrs. Ashworth had delayed making the reduction for weeks after it had been made by their neighbours, that they were conscious of their being forced into the measure by the decay of trade, and this decay they universally attributed to the refusal of the government to admit the materials of payment proffered by those who were anxious to become our customers. On one occasion, the group with which I was conversing on the road was joined by a man who was stated to have belonged to a large factory which had just been closed. He described the increasing misery which this event had produced in the district from which he came,—I think the neighbourhood of Accrington,—and then quite astounded me by declaring that abundant means of furnishing food to the starving, and employment to the idle, so as immediately to relieve all the distress of the manufacturing districts, were in the country, and were perversely withheld. Not a little surprised and perplexed, I asked him for an explanation. "The corn in bond," he instantly replied; "it would pay for my former employer's yarn,—it would give food to my starving family,—it would set those wheels going which are never likely to turn another spindle." Here was a lesson in political economy from a vagrant cotton-spinner which I had not learned from my university education or private study. I felt and confessed my obligation. He coolly replied, "I hope you will never have

such a teacher as I have had,—*it has been starved into me!*" I shall feel obliged to any one who gives me the credit of, inventing this anecdote: for the mind that minted the concluding phrase must have been richly endowed with the highest attributes of genius.

My desire to examine the condition of the operatives in Turton and Egerton before visiting the distressed districts arose from the necessity of having some standard of comparison by which I might measure the amount of distress; in other words, I wished to know what the operatives had fallen *from*, as well as what they had fallen *to*. The necessity of this was strongly impressed upon my mind in a conversation with one of my countrymen, an Irish gentleman who was just paying his first visit to England. I was describing to him the misery of a family of six persons whose united earnings only amounted to eight shillings per week, and he answered that there were families in his own neighbourhood who would think themselves very well off with five of the money. In justice to my countryman I must add that I have heard similar remarks from persons connected with the agricultural counties of England. I despair, indeed, of being able to show to persons who have not personally investigated the difference of right to remuneration between the skilled and unskilled labourer. It requires actual observation, and something of acquaintance with both, to measure the distance between the operative and the ploughman.

I prefer visiting the cottages of Turton to those of Egerton; the latter may be suspected of being something of a show-place. Its immense water-wheel is one of the wonders of Lancashire, and draws crowds of visitors. Few of them fail to be attracted by the substantial neatness of the cottages in the village, and hence the families of the operatives, being used to inspection, may be supposed in some cases to prepare for it. This is not the case at Turton, which lies out of the main lines of road, and is a secluded nook which is not to be reached without some trouble. The principal village occupied by the operatives is named Banktop, from the circumstance of its being situated on the summit of the side of the ravine remote from Mr. Ashworth's dwelling. The situation, though open and airy, is not unsheltered; the cottages are built of stone, and contain from four to six rooms each; back-premises with suitable conveniences are attached to them all. I did not observe any traces of that taste for the cultivation of flowers which I found rife among the occupants of Mr. Ashton's cottages at Hyde in Cheshire, nor did I find that any of the operatives raised in their gardens a supply of vegetables sufficient for the consumption of their families, as I have found in other places. I saw, however, some fine plants of rhubarb, and learned that they often furnished materials for dinner in the shape of puddings. Let me here observe that the domestic economy of the working population would be vastly benefited by a

larger and cheaper supply of sugar than they can at present obtain. It is obvious that fruit and rhubarb pies and puddings would be a cheap and wholesome substitute for meat if the high price of sugar did not more than counterbalance the cheapness of the other materials.* I need not apologize to you for introducing this subject, which many will regard as trifling, for one of the earliest lessons I learned from your Lordship was the importance of the text, "Despise not the day of small things;" and for my own part, I regard nothing as trifling which can tend in any way to promote the health, the happiness, and the comfort of the working population.

I visited the interior of nearly every cottage; I found

* I leave this passage as originally written, though it is loosely expressed, and does not convey my meaning. Were I to propose that any vegetable diet should be "a substitute for meat" in the operative's standard of food, I should have deserved much heavier reprobation than my indulgent censor in the 'Times' has chosen to bestow upon me. I believe that the standard of food could not be lowered without greatly impairing the health, the efficiency, the national value, and even the morality of the operative. My meaning was, that pies, dumplings, &c., might prove an acceptable variety in the operative's fare, and be a good substitute for meat to those who are unable to procure that aliment, which in nine instances out of ten is the case with the junior branches of the operative's family. My opinion on these points is not worth much, but, as the 'Times' has in some degree forced me to express it, I beg leave to say that I consider the standard of food and comfort for the working population of England already far too low, and that one great object at which I have aimed in this little work is to show the danger of any further depression.

all well, and very many respectably, furnished: there were generally a mahogany table and chest of drawers. Daughters from most of the houses, but wives, as far as I could learn, from none, worked in the factory. Many of the women were not a little proud of their housewifery, and exhibited the Sunday wardrobes of their husbands, the stock of neatly folded shirts, &c.; and one of them gave me a very eloquent lecture on the mysteries of needlework, of which, though a tailor, I did not comprehend a syllable; but I could very well appreciate the results in the neatness and comfort around me. I found that there were some processes connected with the cotton manufacture which the women were permitted to execute in their own houses. "The pay," said one of the women, "is not much, but it helps to boil the pot."

As these cottages belong to Mr. Ashworth, I deemed it right to inquire how far the letting of them could be identified with the truck system. I was informed by the operatives that permission to rent one of the cottages was regarded as a privilege and favour, that it was in fact a reward reserved for honesty, industry, and sobriety, and that a tenant guilty of any vice or immorality would at once be dismissed. Mr. Ashworth was said to be very strict in enforcing attention to cleanliness, both of house and person, and in requiring the use of separate sleeping apartments for the children of different sexes. It was sufficiently obvious, from the gossip I heard, that public opinion

had established a very stringent form of moral police in the village, which superseded the necessity of any other. All were not merely contented with their situation, but proud of it; they contrasted their position with that of operatives in mills working half-time, or where business had been suspended, and sometimes expressed a nervous alarm lest the continued depression of trade should at last reach Turton, and reduce its operatives to the condition of those in Bolton. There were many persons employed in the mill who resided at a considerable distance from it, and I found instances of persons who had to walk from three to four miles to their work.

A visit to the schools of Turton and Egerton was peculiarly interesting; the children sang in chorus two hymns, Moore's melody "Those Evening Bells," and some other pieces, with great taste, feeling, and propriety. I examined the children in mental arithmetic, geography, scripture history, and the nature of objects: on all these points the average was above that of any school which I ever visited in my life. The needlework of the girls was very good, and I believe that they receive something of an industrial training in addition to a mere literary education. This, which is valuable everywhere, becomes of the highest importance in Lancashire, where girls, obtaining mill-employment at an early age, have little opportunity of being instructed in domestic economy, and acquiring the knowledge of the countless little

contrivances which contribute so much both to the savings and the comfort of a wife and mother. In at least twenty different places I spoke upon this subject, and endeavoured to persuade the proprietors and managers of schools to have the children initiated into the mysteries of plain and cheap cookery; in all I was met with the same unanswerable argument,—the disproportionate taxation on all the materials from which cheap nutritious dishes can be made. Unfortunately taxation upon articles of food seems to increase in the inverse ratio of the ability to bear it.

It is not easy to fix upon a statistical test for measuring the intelligence of the adult operatives. I found clocks and small collections of books in all their dwellings; several had wheel-barometers, and in one house I noticed a hygrometer of very delicate construction. The books were for the most part on religious subjects; next to the Bible I found that Thomas à Kempis is the greatest favourite with the people of Lancashire. Nowhere did I see a book of immoral or even questionable tendency, unless the writings of the Mormonites, or Latter-day Saints, may be considered as such, for this strange form of fanaticism, which we have imported from America, appears to be taking deep root in Lancashire. Enthusiasm in everything, indeed, appears to be a marked characteristic of this branch of the Saxon race, and it is equally manifested in new forms of religion and in new forms of machinery. In a con-

versation with a Mormonite, I met a curious instance of the perversion of Scripture so common among the leaders of fanatical sects. Among other proofs of flagrant falsehood in that most audacious of forgeries, 'The Book of Mormon,' I pointed out the mention of the mariner's compass, as used in navigation before the Christian era: "You will not find," I said, "any account of the compass in the Bible." "Begging your pardon, you will," said the enlightened controversialist; "in the account of St. Paul's voyage, in the Acts of the Apostles, it is stated, '*We fetched a compass* and stood over to Rhegium.'" So saying, he marched off, fully persuaded that he had silenced his opponent.

I find on my notes (but I have forgotten the locality of the incident) an account of a conversation with a woman who had come to the manufacturing districts from the midland counties; she complained sadly of the particularity with which the rules of cleanliness and decency were enforced, which she said "added hugely to her work." She acknowledged that her health and her comforts had been materially improved by the change, but she seemed to think that these physical ameliorations were nearly counterbalanced by the moral restraint to which she was subjected. Having easily discovered that I was an Irishman, she was very indignant at my want of sympathy with her complaints, averring, unfortunately with truth, that my countrymen were "noways particular in these matters." Her standard of morality did not appear

to be very high: she spoke very bitterly of some mill-owner who had turned a girl out of his employment for having had an illegitimate child, and heartily scolded some of her neighbours who had censured her for not sending her child to the Sunday-school.

I have more than once gone down in the evening to Turton Mills, to see the operatives coming from work. To judge from their appearance, the employment in which they were engaged could not be very fatiguing. The boys were as merry as crickets: there was not one of the girls who looked as if she would refuse an invitation to a dance; and, unless my ears very much deceived me, I heard some such measure proposed by a party of tittering damsels coming from the power-loom shed.

I have thus given, although imperfectly, the aspect of the population connected with a factory which distress has yet only reached in the lenient shape of a reduction of wages: if at this crisis I found such abundant elements of comfort and enjoyment, what would its condition have been if nothing had interfered to check its advancing prosperity?

LETTER III.

Bolton, ——, 1842.

BOLTON witnessed the fatal termination of the career of that erratic nobleman, the Earl of Derby, whose previous title, Lord Strange, was the most appropriate ever given in the peerage. From an old print of the execution the town appears to have been a place of little note at the time of the civil wars, scarcely extending beyond the square of the market. In the reign of Elizabeth, Camden did not think the plac worthy of notice in his account of Lancashire, though he mentions Rochdale and Bury, which are now very far inferior to it. From Mr. Henry Ashworth's paper on the increase of the value in property of South Lancashire, I find that its full annual value in 1692, estimated by the land-tax returns, was 169*l.*, while its present annual value, according to the county assessment of 1841, is 93,916*l.*, being an increase of 54,388*l.* per cent. In a place where the value of property had, in about a century and a half, been in-

creased nearly six hundred-fold, it would be natural to expect the most gratifying picture of unexampled prosperity. The fact is, that the mass of the population is on the very brink of sheer destitution, and that thousands are absolutely starving.

I never heard of any one who ventured to assert that the growth of this physical property was in anywise attributable to legislation, and I never heard of anybody who did not assert that perverse legislation of some kind or other was not the main cause of the present suffering. Take the naked fact as it stands: the producers of this enormous wealth—for the whole of it is absolutely the produce of skill and industry—are not allowed to be its consumers; are not permitted even to retain so much of it as would afford them a bare subsistence. How the fact may be explained I have no wish to speculate about, but its reality is proved by the stern evidence of my senses.

The united population of Great and Little Bolton is, in round numbers, 50,000 souls, which is at least tenfold what it was one hundred years ago. Now I must confess, my Lord, that, even in the time of our greatest commercial prosperity, I never could bring myself to view those vast masses of human beings which manufactures have aggregated on a limited spot, without feelings of awe and apprehension. "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum*" is as plainly marked in the paths that lead to any great branch of national industry as in those that led to the den of the fabled lion. I know

very well that it is one of the hardest things in the world to get people to recognise what they do not like as *un fait accompli*, for both you and I know persons who refuse to believe the simple fact that this is the nineteenth century, and who persist in regarding society as if neither its constitution nor its character had varied since the days of the Stuarts. The existence of thousands of operatives dependent on manufactures for employment and for food is a fact which it would be well for the nation if men would recognise, not with what Paley calls "otiose assent," but with a living conviction both of the truth and its consequences. There they are, and there they will remain; you cannot get rid of them by any means short of actual extermination. It would be the very consummation of human absurdity to ask them to go back to the condition of farm-labourers and agriculturists; even if the land could support them,—which assuredly it would not without an agrarian partition wider and more extensive than any of which the wildest Spenceans ever dreamed,—they would starve during the process of unlearning their handicraft trades and learning their new occupation. And, furthermore, I should not be much tempted to rely on the word of any person who would pledge himself for their preserving their temper and patient endurance during the operation. In their present condition they can say with perfect truth, "Dig we cannot, and to beg we are ashamed."

I have seen misery in many forms; I have been in the huts and hovels of Ireland, when my native land was visited with the fearful scourge of cholera; I have visited the cellars of Liverpool, where existence assumes an aspect which ceases to be human; I have penetrated into the wynds and vennels of Glasgow, localities which would try to the uttermost the hardest of hearts and the strongest of stomachs;—but nowhere have I seen misery which so agonized my very soul as that which I have witnessed in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire. And why? Because the extreme of wretchedness was there, and there only, combined with a high tone of moral dignity, a marked sense of propriety, a decency, cleanliness, and order, the elements which produced the vast wealth I have described, and which do not merit the intense suffering I have witnessed. I was beholding the gradual immolation of the noblest and most valuable population that ever existed in this country or in any other under heaven. We are not stocks and stones: I am as firmly persuaded as I am of my own existence, that, if the noble and wealthy had witnessed the scenes which I have gone through, they would fling all prejudices and selfish interests to the winds, they would stretch forth eager hands to raise the sufferers, pour oil and wine into the wounds they have inflicted, and devote the whole of their energies, heart and soul, to prevent the recurrence of such misery. I am every day more and

more convinced of the truth of what I stated in my 'Natural History of Society,' that the classes into which English society is divided are opposed to each other because they are ignorant of each other; unequal and unjust conditions are imposed upon labour only from sheer ignorance of the labourer's economy; and I only repeat the exclamation of a distressed operative when I quote the affecting words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

I visited several families of the distressed operatives in Bolton, accompanied by a gentleman well acquainted with the locality; though he was nominally my guide, I took the houses I entered to examine nearly at random. The invariable account given in every place was "no work," and, as a consequence, "no food, no furniture, and no clothing." We entered one house tenanted by a young couple whom I at first mistook for brother and sister: they were a husband and wife, about six years married, but fortunately without children. On a table of the coarsest wood, but perfectly clean, stood what we were assured was the only meal they had tasted for twenty-four hours, and the only one they had any reasonable prospect of tasting for twenty-four hours to come. It consisted of two small plates of meal porridge, a thin oaten cake, some tea so diluted that it had scarcely a tinge of colour, and a small portion of the coarsest sugar in the fragment of a broken bowl. The husband had

been a cotton-spinner, but the factory to which he belonged had been closed for several weeks; the wife had also been employed in the same establishment. When in good work the united earnings of both averaged about 30*s.* weekly; but for several (I think they said thirteen) weeks they had not been able to earn so many pence. Their furniture had been sold piecemeal to supply pressing necessities, their clothes had been pawned, they had hoped for better times, but they felt that their condition was "worsening." The man would have gone to a foreign land, but he could not leave his wife alone to die, and her constitution would not bear the rough travelling which falls to the lot of light pockets. My friend asked whether, under the circumstances, he did not lament his early and imprudent marriage. He paused, looked fondly at his wife, who reciprocated his gaze with a melancholy smile of enduring affection; tears gathered in his manly eye, and his lip quivered with strong emotion; he dashed the tear aside, mastered his emotions with one convulsive effort, which however shook his entire frame, and with calm firmness replied, "Never! We have been happy and we have suffered together; she has been the same to me all through."

I found that this interesting couple had a thorough horror of being forced to receive parish relief. Let me add that I found the same feeling in nearly all the distressed operatives whom I met north of Man-

chester. They may have been talked into a hatred of the New Poor Law, but from their souls they loathed pauperism, as being odious to that sturdy pride of independence which no race of mankind ever possessed in such superabundance as the men of Lancashire. That spirit still survives:—

> "The stately pine is still unbent,
> Though many a goodly bough is rent."

But let me add, with bitter grief, that I cannot answer for the continuance of this noble quality. In Stockport it has at length given way, "the stubborn neck is bended to the yoke;" misery has demoralized an entire generation by depriving it of self-respect; and if the present pressure continues, Bolton will also witness the crushing out and utter annihilation of all those moral qualities which it is the first of national duties to appreciate and encourage.

There is a moral loveliness in the destitution of Bolton which irresistibly called to my mind a phrase I had somewhere read, "the moonlight majesty of ruin," and which phrase I had unwisely stigmatized as nonsensical; but I know of no other that so aptly describes every quality which could ennoble prosperity flourishing in the midst of suffering. I have often seen and heard of abject distress, but noble distress was worth coming hundreds of miles to witness,—and thousands of miles if the visitor could bring relief.

The misery of Bolton is contagious: it has spread from the operative class to the grades of the middle rank more immediately above them; it ascends higher as it extends wider, threatening to involve all in one common mass of pauperism. My Lord, there are men who declare that this is a consummation devoutly to be wished; there are apostles of revolution abroad who preach that the bringing down of the middle class to the lowest level of suffering is the only chance for effecting such a general insurrection against authority as will end in an entire breaking up of the English system of social order. I know that this dangerous creed is not confined to the columns of the 'Northern Star,' though even of that paper the influence is very much underrated by the majority of people in the South; but I have heard the sentiment advocated a thousand times, and it afforded a clue to a phrase which I heard almost everywhere, "We must be worse before we shall be better." I do not believe that the creed is yet so well established as to become with any a principle of action; but such a tenet has a perilous vitality. An appeal to the worst of passions in the worst of times may probably realize Virgil's description of Fame:—

> "First small through fear, she swells to monstrous size,
> And stalks on earth, and towers amid the skies."

One great cause which has impeded the propagation of this wicked delusion among the men of Lancashire

is the pride of industry, a very rare and noble quality, which seems inherent in the nature of all genuine Lancastrians. I do not include under this designation the men of Manchester, for they are a mixed race,—I speak chiefly of the foresters of Rosendale and Pendle, and the men who have established themselves in the upper valleys of the Irwell and the Ribble. No nobleman ever took more pride in a large estate than a genuine Lancastrian does in a large business; he would rather have your admiration of his mill than of his mansion, and if you happen to be pleased by any of his peculiar mechanisms or contrivances his admiration is complete. In the same way, the operative is far more thankful for employment than for alms: if he could obtain the one, he would look upon the offer of the other as an insult. An instance of this feeling came under our notice in Bolton: an operative out of work solicited us to enter his house; it was for the purpose of showing us some water-colour paintings which he had made in this period of reluctant leisure. They were marked y strength and spirit, though they were coarse and unartistic. He had received instruction from Nature only, and to Nature all his delineations were faithful. A sixpence given to one of his children, a fine, though a hungry-looking boy, scarcely elicited a word of acknowledgment, while the purchase of the picture of a dog (which he could hardly have painted in less than

two days) for three shillings was received with thanks, "warm from the heart and faithful to its fires."

I have often heard those who were sceptical as to the extent of the distress in the manufacturing districts ask a question, to which, but for my present tour, I could not have given a satisfactory answer. They say such distress as that which you portray would be unendurable; if it existed, public order could not be preserved, the whole framework of society would be shivered into atoms. I must confess that this doubt existed in my own mind, for I never could have anticipated the iron endurance which characterizes the stubborn spirit of Lancashire. But there is another and more important cause for the continuance of peace; the factory operatives are deeply convinced that no portion of their sufferings can be fairly ascribed to the capitalists and mill-owners; the pressure of distress has brought the masters and the men closer together, and exhibited demonstratively their mutuality of interests. If the factory operatives believed one word of the addresses made to them by ignorant fools or wicked incendiaries, who have endeavoured to persuade them that mills and machinery have caused their distress, the whole army of England could not defer the utter ruin of Lancashire for twenty-four hours. But they know and declare that the cause of their misery is that mills are idle and that machinery stands still; and they also know that an outbreak

would only make matters worse by destroying the scanty means of employment which still protract their existence.*

My attention in Bolton was attracted to the "Tale of a Shirt"—if the phrase excites a smile I cannot help it—*Res sunt humanæ flebile ludibrium;* Shakspeare himself recognises the fact that there is a mirth belonging to sorrow as well as to joy, and my ears have become familiar to the laugh of bitterness. I have met more than one of whom it could be said,

> "He had a conceit still left him in his misery,—
> A miserable conceit."

This shirt belonged to a man who had been a weaver of shirtings, and yet it was the only one which he possessed. It had been patched and re-patched with all imaginable varieties of fabric until the original material was as hard to be discovered as that of Sir John Cutler's silk stockings, which Locke assures us had been so often darned with worsted that not one particle of the silk remained. It was scarcely possible to conceive, and it is utterly impossible to describe, how such an assemblage of shreds and patches could be held together. The condition of the wife was

* The great "Turn-out" which has taken place since this passage was written has given strong confirmation of its truth; no mill or machine was wantonly injured during the entire commotion.

worse; she did not possess a chemise, she had not had one for many months. She was suckling a wretched infant from a withered breast, and those who witnessed the agonizing scene will never forget how the poor babe writhed on the lap and wrung the nipple with convulsive energies in the desperate attempt to extort that nutriment which the exhausted breast could not afford.

I have often laughed at the senseless cry of over-production; for I cannot believe that any such thing exists until I am assured that there exists not on this earth an individual capable of labour, and yet in want of a waistcoat, a gown, a shirt, or a petticoat. I never can laugh at the cry again; that patched shirt, that suffering mother, that wretched babe, are for ever associated in my mind with the subject. They afforded proof that deficient absorption and not over-production was the source of our commercial distress: the employer of this man had piles of pieces of shirtings lying idle in his warehouse, and he had been driven to close his mill because law had closed his markets. Alas! I see that it is much easier to close a market than a mill,—to disgust or displease the purchasers of commodities by refusing to receive the products of their labour in payment, than to change the direction of the industry by which these commodities are produced.

It was impossible for me to go through this, which

I recollect some years ago a prosperous and bustling region, without being struck by the force and truth of your Lordship's definition, that man is a *catallactic animal*, and that the interchange of the products of labour is the prime necessity of his social existence. It seems to me an obvious corollary from the primeval doom, "in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread;" it affords the proper compensation for that doom by its developing and fostering all the high principles to which the exertion of honourable industry gives birth, and by its establishing all the moral links which unite individual to individual, as well as nation to nation. "Do not let a country depend for any of its supplies on foreign nations" is a cry every whit as absurd as "Do not let a family purchase food and clothing from the neighbouring shopkeepers." The short answer to such nonsense is, that we are dependent on foreigners already. For instance, we are dependent upon the United States for cotton, which is to the operatives of Lancashire as necessary an element of life as corn, for, though not the material for making bread, it furnishes the only means by which those materials can be produced by the factory operatives. I shall never forget, when the British Association met at Liverpool, the vivid eloquence with which Lord Sandon described the fearful results that would follow from a short supply of cotton, stating, at the same time, that there was a

period when the North of England was menaced with such a perilous crisis, when, in consequence of the long prevalence of unfavourable winds, the stock of cotton on hand was so reduced that enough was not left in the country for six weeks' consumption. I refer all those who are still duped by this senseless cry to his Lordship for its most satisfactory refutation: sufficient conviction was brought to my own mind by the reply of one of the distressed operatives with whom I conversed on the subject. It was, in substance, "When my starving children cry for bread, do you think I would ask who manufactured the loaf which would satisfy their craving appetites?" The same man set at rest another part of the fallacy: I asked him if he had no fears that foreign nations would refuse to supply us with corn; might they not enter into a conspiracy to starve us? He laughed in my face, and said, "I have no fear of getting bread so long as I have the means of paying for it. The baker over the way hates me as he hates the ——, on account of a rough and tumble we had at the election, but I assure you he would not be such a fool as to refuse my custom for a loaf."

Perhaps your Lordship may require "to be edified by the margent" as to the meaning of the phrase "rough and tumble," for which I had to ask an explanation. It is a Lancashire combination of boxing and wrestling, which is carried to such an excess that

it is very likely to leave enduring marks as well as deep resentment behind. I did not carry my inquiries into this subject any farther, for I have no ambition to receive Lancashire instruction in pugilism, though I trust to be benefited all my life by the lessons, derived from intelligence and experience, which the operatives have given me in Political Economy.

LETTER IV.

Rosendale Forest, ——, 1842.

THE weather has favoured my excursions: I have never felt the air more balmy than when I left Turton this morning to visit this district, which is probably the most interesting example of rapid improvement in England, and probably not surpassed even in the United States. My companions showed the truth of Shakspeare's assertion, that man is subject to all the skiey influences. They were two boys, at home for the vacation, full of life, and spirits so exuberant that every passenger was attracted by their glee; and a manufacturer, who, though usually as grave as a Stoic, could not resist the smile of earth and sky, but laughed as merrily as if he had been a denizen of the gardens of Epicurus. Our way lay through an undulating country of a very different character from that to which the name is usually applied, for the hills were for the most part abrupt and steep, and the valleys assumed the character of ravines. Doubtless it was through this part of Lancashire that the Norman William found such difficulty in leading his army from the hills of Yorkshire to his fortress of Chester, when he had destroyed the last relic of Saxon independence, and punished the love of freedom and independence

inherent in the Saxon race by devastating with fire and sword the whole tract of country between York and Durham. "Passing the bordering hills of Yorkshire," says my authority, Mr. Ashworth's able statistical paper already quoted, "his way was over the southern division of Lancashire, which he found a mere waste, uncultivated, without roads, and almost uninhabited; so that, by reason of destructive marshes, impenetrable woods, perilous rivers, and overflowed valleys, his soldiers were grievously harassed, some of them murmured aloud at the hardships to which their chief was exposing them, and threatened to return to the continent. The king was obliged to cheer his men by advancing before them on foot, and often had to assist with his own hands to extricate them from their dangers."

The Norman would have been incredulous to any prophet who had then foretold the wondrous change which has been wrought by the industry, intelligence, and enterprise of the men of Lancashire; a change which is admirably described by the same author, who might have added that he himself has had no small share in effecting this great and beneficent revolution. "In this otherwise unpromising locality, manufactures and commerce have found a genial soil. In the hands of this race of people, the sciences of mechanics and chemistry have been applied to manufacturing industry with a practical intelligence previously unknown. Steam-power has been introduced

and successfully applied to all the varied forms of mechanical invention. Those rivers, remembered for the obstructions they *once* presented to monarchical and military aggression, are *now* directed to the propelling of machinery: they are lending their aid in the bleaching, dyeing, and printing of our fabrics, and assist in many other manufacturing and mercantile services. They are crossed with bridges almost out of number, bearing roads and railroads through that country of 'destructive morasses and impenetrable woods' which nearly thwarted regal enterprise."

But manufacturing industry has not only raised the prosperity of all the places in which it was developed, —it has extended its benefits to the surrounding neighbourhood. The cultivated lands through which we passed were originally waste moor and moss: such they must ever have remained had not the accumulation of population around the factories opened an immediate market for farming produce, which gave the strongest impulse to farming industry. The former wastes have been cultivated to the very tops of their hills and the very margin of their streams; the soil has literally been ploughed by the spindle and sowed by the shuttle and the loom. It is to manufactures that this district is indebted for the moor blooming as the garden, and the desert blossoming as the rose. A curious instance of the rapid increase of the value of farms was related by my companion. He showed me a piece of ground which a farmer had

formerly rented at thirty pounds a-year, but he was unable to work it with profit on account of the distance of the market to which he had to send his produce, and he sank deeply in debt. That same farmer subsequently rented that same ground at seventy pounds a-year, and out of its profits at the higher rent paid the entire debt which he had incurred at the lower rent.

On our road we passed the ancient residence of President Bradshaw, the Regicide: he lived in a spot well calculated to nurture his republican tendencies. The population around him appears never to have been thoroughly reconciled to the Norman yoke: the foresters of Rosendale, like those of Sherwood, belonged to the true Saxon stock, and seem to have regarded the king and the aristocracy as oppressive aliens long after all traces of their foreign lineage had disappeared. My companion, who was himself of the forest race, and as proud of his descent as if he had sprung from the Mowbrays or the Geraldines, strenuously insisted that the great civil war was not less a contest of races than of principles. Though a man of peace, he spoke so warmly in favour of the Long Parliament, that I have little doubt if he had lived in the seventeenth century he would have followed the banners of Brook or Fairfax. Nor was this a solitary instance. I have visited at various times the principal battle-fields rendered memorable in Lancashire during the contest, and I found very

accurate traditions both of the localities and the persons engaged. On one occasion, near the borders of Yorkshire, I met a young gentleman, whose name I have forgotten, who told me that his grandfather kept up the fashion of having a calf's head without brains on the 30th of January. It is to be hoped that he knew more about the matter than an Irish gentleman of Cromwellian descent, who faithfully observed the usage, but supposed that, like the toast of "the pious memory," it was intended to be a standing protest against popery. I must add that this Irish adherent to the most offensive of republican usages was also the most strenuous advocate of passive obedience and non-resistance I had ever met in my life.

Soon after passing Bradshaw's house my attention was attracted by an obelisk on the top of a hill over the town of Bury. I learned that it had been erected by the Grants, the "Cheeryble Brothers" of 'Nicholas Nickleby.' Several anecdotes were related to me confirming the account which Dickens has given of their liberality and generosity. One monument of it was before me—a handsome Scottish church, which they had erected for the use of their workmen, after having provided an endowment for the minister. In connection with this subject I may notice the pleasure I derived from seeing a large number of new churches erected or in process of erection. In a letter which I addressed to your Lordship some years ago, describing

a little tour on the western side of Lancashire, I mentioned that I had not seen a single spire between the Ribble and the Lune, and hazarded a conjecture that the church architects had shrunk from a competition with the tall chimneys of the factories. More recent builders have not been daunted by these formidable rivals; but I wish that they had been, for most of their spires, like the architectural enormity in Langham Place, remind one of an extinguisher on a bedchamber candlestick.

It was noon when we entered the limits of the ancient Chase or Forest of Rosendale, and from my companion, who is passionately fond of the locality and everything connected with it, I learned the following particulars of its early history and present condition.

The Forest or ancient Chase of Rosendale contains an area of twenty-four square miles, and may be adduced as an instance of progressive improvement possessing considerable interest. The existence of the wolf in that forest is attested by the names of *Wolfstones* and *Wolfenden* attaching to places in that locality; and is also corroborated by the circumstance that one of the Deans of Whalley acquired the name of "*Cutwulph*," from his having *cut off the tail of a wolf* whilst hunting in the forest at a place called Ledmesgreave.

In the early part of the sixteenth century the inhabitants consisted of eighty souls, residing in booths.

It is stated in a petition of the inhabitants to Henry VII. and VIII. that, forty-four years before, the forest was replenished only or chiefly with foresters, or keepers of the deer. Proceeding—it goes on to represent that, if the deer were entirely taken away, the forest was likely to come to some good purpose, and that the commonwealth might be increased thereby.

The forest was disforested, the lands became apportioned, demised, and let for terms of years, or by copy of court-roll. The petitioners proceed to state, "So that, whereas before that time there was nothing else but deer and other savage and wild beasts, there is since, by industry of the inhabitants, grown to be very fertile ground, well replenished with people." And "Forasmuch as the Castle church of Clitheroe (being their parish church) is distant twelve miles from the said forest, and the wais very foul, painful, hillous, and perilous, and the country in the winter season so extremely and vehemently cold that infants borne to the church to be christened are in great peril of their lives; and that the aged and impotent people, and the women also, are not able to travel so far to hear the word of God; and that the dead corpses are at such times like to lie there and remain unburied for lack of carriage, till great annoyance doth grow thereby."

The premises being considered, the inhabitants were allowed to erect Goodshaw chapel, at their own

cost, as a chapel of ease. The forest-lands were apportioned into nineteen booths or vaccaries, and the annual value, or "*advanced rent*," settled upon them by royal or parliamentary commission, and confirmed by James I., amounted to 122*l.* 13*s.* 8*d.*

Upon the introduction of the woollen manufacture into the North of England, the foresters of Rosendale did not long continue to expend the whole of their energies upon the cultivation of a sterile soil; they entered with avidity into this branch of industry, and have pursued it for a very long period, with a remarkable degree of success.

About forty-five years ago the cotton manufacture was first introduced, and now threatens, in its extent, to surpass the woollen trade; so that the forest is now possessed of both these sources of employment upon a very large scale.

The people have become multiplied, from the original census of 80 souls, to upwards of 21,000. They have usually enjoyed an abundance of regular and well-paid employment; the scale of their comforts has gradually improved, and the numbers of their schools and places of worship may be taken as evidence that their intelligence, their religious, moral, and social standing have steadily advanced. The manufacturers and merchants of Rosendale have ever been distinguished for enterprise and ability, and their intercourse may be said to have extended to every mercantile country in the world.

On every hand the sides of the hills are adorned

with the commodious and substantial dwellings of the master manufacturers, manifesting abundant indications of the possession of wealth and comfort. An amazing increase has taken place in the value of property. Land used exclusively for farming purposes commands upwards of *ten times* the rental of a century ago; and farms formerly tenanted by persons now living are let at seven or eight times the sums which themselves have once paid. In the populous parts building land is rented at 6*d.* and 6½*d.* per square yard, being 121*l.* to 131*l.* per acre, or a larger sum than was paid for the whole forest of 15,360 acres in the reign of James I.

By the last year's survey for the county assessment, the annual rental of the forest is 50,035*l.*, or an increase of 41,000 per cent. upon the parliamentary survey before alluded to; bearing out the prediction of the petitioners, that the "removal of the deer would come to good purpose, and the commonwealth be increased thereby."

After having heard this account, I felt that, if I could be heard, I would from my soul adopt the stirring appeal of John Milton, which cannot be too often quoted:—

"Lords and Commons of England! consider what it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors: a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit: acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse; not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can

soar to. What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing people, a nation of prophets, of sages, and of worthies?"

I was not long in Rosendale without meeting some of the foresters, who amply realize the great poet's description, and truly deserve to rank as "prophets," as "sages," and as "worthies." We stopped at the mills of Hollymount, belonging to three brothers named Whitehead. They received us with great kindness and cordiality, readily offering to conduct us over the establishment. The mill, which is being erected in place of one that had been accidentally burned down, is one of the most extraordinary architectural works in Lancashire. A river flows beneath its arched floor, and has necessitated an expenditure of nearly as much building below as appears above the surface. The engine-bed is, I believe, without a parallel: no one who looks at the enormous blocks of stone of which it is composed can any longer feel surprised that the Orientals believe the monoliths of Egypt and the Cyclopic masses in the walls of Baalbec to have been shaped and brought to their places by beings of a superior order. The machinery exhibited all the latest refinements of mechanical ingenuity: I was particularly struck by some improvements in the carding-machines and drawing-frames, and I may perhaps be permitted to specify a contrivance for throwing the latter out of gear whenever a sliver

breaks, by which means the tenter's notice is at once directed to the deficiency. Although my companion was engaged in the same trade as themselves, there was no jealousy displayed in preventing him from scrutinizing the machinery: on the contrary, I observed with pleasure that great pains were taken to direct his attention to various little matters which might have escaped his attention, and which it was supposed he might profitably introduce into his works. This appears to me the more deserving of remark as I have had some very unpleasant indications of a contrary feeling when I visited certain mills in Cheshire, which was sufficiently absurd as I was notoriously neither a cotton-spinner nor in any way connected with manufactures.

The village of Hollymount would elsewhere be called a thriving town. The residences of the operatives are not so much cottages as handsome houses consisting of from four to six rooms, provided with every convenience necessary for comfort and cleanliness. They are all well furnished—in many cases with mahogany: I saw none destitute of a clock and a small collection of books, generally on religious subjects. The children in the village were remarkably healthy, neat, and intelligent. They answered the few casual questions addressed to them with a politeness of demeanour and propriety of expression which could not be surpassed in much higher ranks of life. I was informed that most of the men were teetotalers,

and that they had invested considerable sums of money in the savings-bank. If the entire forest had been similar to Hollymount, it would have been an earthly paradise.

Your Lordship has long been aware of the deep interest I feel in all matters connected with National Education, for it was that which first procured for me the honour and the advantage of your acquaintance: you will therefore readily believe that my attention was anxiously directed to the means provided for the instruction of the children. I found them such as I believe could not be surpassed in any other locality.

The school attached to the factory was one of the most elegant and convenient buildings I have ever seen devoted to the purposes of education: it was well ventilated, and furnished with the best apparatus for being lighted with gas and heated with warm water. It could not have cost less than a thousand pounds. The children pay twopence per week for instruction, but the expenses are defrayed by the benevolent proprietors, and the weekly stipend is allowed to accumulate as a reserve fund, to be paid back to each pupil at twenty-one years of age.

The Messrs. Whitehead are very properly strict in enforcing this weekly payment: they deem it of importance to impress continually on the minds of parents the moral duty of providing for the education of their children, and they are doubtful of the propriety of affording perfectly gratuitous instruction, since

what is given for nothing is too often valued at nothing. My own experience confirms the propriety of their view, for I know an instance of a benevolent landlord, who, upon urging one of his tenants to take advantage of a charity-school for his children, and inquiring whether he would do so, received the answer which Mungo gave when asked "Would he be honest?" that is, "What will you give me, Massa?"

I found the villagers of Hollymount healthy, happy, and contented. The operatives, one and all, declared that their only anxiety was, lest the progress of distress should reach the establishment of Hollymount, and deprive them of the employment they possessed, and the comforts they produced.

The residences of the Messrs. Whitehead are built in a row on the top of a little eminence just above the factory. The three houses are, so to speak, echoes of each other; they have precisely the same aspect in front, the same set of conveniences in the rear, gardens of exactly the same size, and, for aught I know, families of precisely the same amount, for in reckoning the children I soon "lost count." Though stags are banished from the forest, it has still a large and fine assortment of "pretty little dears." I spent a great part of the day with one of the brothers, and for the first time thoroughly appreciated the value of the character which Horace calls the "*Abnormis Sapiens*." I cannot add the "*Crassâ Minervâ*," for the gentleman read me a letter on the corn-laws,

which he had addressed to the 'Manchester Times,' and a better or closer piece of reasoning has not yet appeared on this hackneyed subject.

I found that the Messrs. Whitehead were Methodists: they took me to see the chapel which had been erected in Hollymount, a building of the Ionic order, and which to me, uninitiated in the rules of art, appears one of the prettiest specimens of the modern imitations of Grecian architecture I have ever seen. There is a defect in the position of the building: it is not easy to get a view of its full front, and the volutes of Ionic columns seen cornerwise invariably remind one of the rams' horns from which the first notion of these ornaments is said to have been derived. The interior of the chapel struck me as superior in arrangement and picturesque effect to any of the modern churches in the Grecian style I have yet seen. The galleries projected to an equal extent all round: the pulpit, reading-desk, &c., were thus considerably advanced towards the centre of the building, while the space under the gallery behind them gave room for a very comfortable vestry at one side of the vestibule, and a kind of sacristy at the other. The centre-pews formed an ellipse, and round them ran the pipes for heating and lighting the chapel. I should very much wish to have seen it when lighted, and I am not without hope that I may yet have this pleasure, for, if ever I can, I shall repeat my visit to Rosendale and Hollymount. The pulpit, reading-

desk, and communion-table are of mahogany, of that beautiful kind which is, I believe, called "tulip-wood." Whatever may be its name, I do not think that either in material or workmanship it is surpassed in this country.

I have dwelt, perhaps disproportionately, on this chapel, because I can never forget the observation which one of the Messrs. Whitehead made to my companion, when asked respecting the cost of the building. "It pleased God," said he, "to extend peculiar blessings to us, who were left fatherless at an early age, in the care of a widowed mother. When we had been so far favoured in our exertions as to enable us to build the three houses on yonder hill, we felt that the Author of our prosperity ought not to be worshipped in a house inferior to that in which we dwelt." You know, because you have often censured, my propensity to ridicule what I deem to be in any way an approach to cant, and therefore, if there had been anything like it here, you may be assured the mark would have been hit. But Mr. Whitehead spoke as if he had been thinking aloud: the sentence had scarcely passed his lips when he manifestly showed that he felt as if what he said might expose him to the imputation of self-praise; he at once changed the conversation, nor could he by any possible effort be got to renew it.

Within the memory of living men Hollymount and the surrounding district were little better than

an uncultivated waste, where the stony ground produced a scanty herbage for a few cattle: its present condition need not be again described nor a contrast drawn. After having witnessed such great and beneficent results effected entirely by the labour of the men of Lancashire, it was impossible not to feel sympathy in the hardships to which that labour was said to be exposed at the present crisis, mingled with some dread of the consequences if the prosperity which industry had created should retrograde as rapidly as it had advanced, and if the masses of population which abundance of employment had aggregated in the ancient forest should be left suddenly destitute—

> "To ask the rugged hills they tread
> For fatten'd steer or household bread."

The rest of the quotation would not be altogether inapplicable; they would literally have

> "To ask for food those shingles dry,—
> And well the mountains might reply,
> 'We give you shelter in our breast;
> Your own "stout hands" must win the rest.'"

From Hollymount we drove to Crashaw Booth, as I had been invited to make Sunnyside my quarters. Here I parted from my companions, and, as it was yet early, I proceeded on the same evening to Burnley, where the contrast to what I had seen in the morning was perfectly heart-rending. Groups of idlers stood in the midst of the street; their faces haggard with

famine, and their eyes rolling with that fierce and uneasy expression which I have often noticed in maniacs. I went up to some of them, and entered into conversation. They were perfectly candid and communicative; for the men of this part of Lancashire retain much of the sturdy independence of the ancient foresters: they will go miles to do you a service, but they will not stir one inch to do homage to ealth or station. Each man had his own tale of sorrow to tell; their stories were not

"The short and simple annals of the poor;"

they were complicated details of misery and suffering, gradual in their approach and grinding in their result; borne, however, with an iron endurance such as the Saxon race alone displays, and with the sternness belonging to that noblest form of pride—the pride of independent labour. "We want not charity, but employment," was their unanimous declaration; and proofs of their truth were abundant in the anecdotes told and verified of men having travelled miles to obtain a job, however heavy the labour, and however wretched the remuneration.

I found them all Chartists, but with this difference—that the block-printers and handloom-weavers united to their Chartism a hatred of machinery, which was far from being shared by the factory operatives. The latter also deprecated anything like an appeal to physical force, while the former strenuously urged an

immediate appeal to arms. There was no concealment of sentiment on either side. I heard more than twenty openly advocate the expediency of burning down the mills, in order to compel the factory-hands to join in an insurrectionary movement. A mill had been burned down at Colne two nights previously; doubts were entertained whether this had been the result of design or accident, and in the streets of Burnley there were groups expressing their hopes that it would be traced to design and followed by imitation, while the heaviest curses were bestowed on the factory-hands of Colne for having heartily exerted themselves to check the conflagration, and to supply water to the engines. Permit me to repeat that these sentiments were expressed openly and in the public streets. I stood amongst them and was known to be a stranger: there was no appearance of speaking either with a design to be overheard, or an anxiety for concealment. Had I been one of the posts in the street, my presence could not have been viewed with more perfect indifference.

Having been furnished with a letter of introduction to a very intelligent manufacturer, I applied to him for information respecting the causes and consequences of the existing distress. The cause, according to him, was simple enough: our laws prevented us from receiving the only payment which our customers had to offer, and hence they could not take our goods; absorption, therefore, did not keep pace

with production, and, production being consequently diminished, employment was withdrawn from the labour-market in the same proportion. But employment to the operative is identical with food, clothing, and all the means of existence. "All trade," said he, "is but barter, and money is only the common measure by which we are able to compare the value of articles to be exchanged." A disciple of yours could not be ignorant of this truth, but the form in which it was stated gave the aphorism a force and point which had all the effect of novelty. The same gentleman dwelt very strongly on the moral results of the crisis, which he described as far more alarming than its physical consequences; marriages had nearly ceased, while young persons, from having no work, were thrown together in dangerous circumstances, their passions stimulated by anger and their powers of restraint destroyed by desperation. Revenge, "the wild justice of the hopeless," was preached by itinerant incendiaries; but while "the shadow of a chance" remained he did not believe that the people would have recourse to violence. "If, however," he continued, "they once get it into their heads that no remedy is to be expected, there will be no safety in Burnley for any man with a decent coat to his back." From the conversations which I subsequently had with several of the unemployed operatives in this district, I am firmly persuaded that my informant did not exaggerate. The people in this part of Lan-

cashire are a rough, obstinate, and self-willed race, just the class of men that would be described in cant phrase as "ugly customers." They have given some very unpleasant proofs of their determination to have their own way in their opposition to the introduction of the police: they have more than once formed plans for provoking a contest with that force, and it was only by the exercise of the most extraordinary forbearance on the part of the police that fatal consequences were averted. But they are still a noble race of men: though now suffering the most severe privations, the roads are as safe as in the most prosperous times, and I had no reason to fear insult or injury when I returned, at a very late hour, over a lonesome mountain-road to Sunnyside.

LETTER V.

Rosendale Forest, ——, 1842.

At every step of my journey I find the truth of what I was told in Manchester, that the great wish of the manufacturers is to have their case thoroughly investigated and honestly made known. Every one to whom I have applied has exerted himself to facilitate my inquiries; a gig and servant were placed at my disposal by the hospitable proprietor of Sunnyside, and, thus provided, I started early this morning for Colne. On my road I was stopped by a group of seven operatives, who stated their distress in firm but respectful terms, and asked for relief. One of the men particularly struck my attention; he was the living skeleton of a giant. His tale was soon told: he had been a weaver of mousselines-de-laine, and in prosperous times had earned from thirty to forty shillings per week; he had a wife and four children dependent on his exertions, and he had long maintained them in decency and comfort; work began to grow slack, he hoped that times would mend, and was unwilling that his family should lose the comforts to which they had been accustomed; he drew the little

fund he had placed in the savings-bank; it was soon exhausted, and work was slacker than ever. He began to retrench, and to sell part of his furniture. He told how each article was resigned with bitter regret, and how hope of retrieving his affairs gradually faded. Before last Christmas everything had disappeared, including the Sunday dresses of himself, his wife, and children. Since that time he had been for seventeen weeks without work of any kind, and had been principally supported by the charity of neighbours little better off than himself. When I offered him a shilling he refused to receive it until I had given him my name and address, that he might repay it if ever an opportunity offered.

I was afterwards informed that some of these groups did not exhibit the same moderation which I had experienced. A gentleman who was stopped by a similar party near Burnley tendered five shillings, which was rejected, and he deemed it prudent to give a sovereign, in order that he might be permitted to pass. Having taken some pains to investigate the truth of this anecdote to no purpose, I can only say that it is inconsistent with everything which I met in the whole course of my inquiries.

Our road to Colne lay through the ancient Chase or Forest of Pendle, once the chosen abode of the witches, warlocks, and demoniacs, who in the reign of Elizabeth filled the whole North of England with alarm, and almost persuaded people that Satan had

seized upon the duchy palatine of Lancaster as his proper heritage, and installed himself heir-general of the Plantagenets. It is curious to see what admirable taste witches and monks have displayed in selecting their localities: it is scarcely possible to find a spot remarkable for its natural scenery, whether beautiful, picturesque, or romantic, without lighting on the ruins of an abbey or the story of a witch.* To the right of our road was the high range of hills separating Yorkshire from Lancashire, called by the peasants in the neighbourhood "the Backbone of England." Pendle Hill towered far above the rest: I regretted that time did not permit me to undertake its ascent, for I was assured that from its summit I could see both the eastern and western seas of England. Still more do I regret my ignorance of geology, and that Sir Henry de la Beche failed to convince me that "breaking stones upon the road" was a very delightful employment: even to an inexperienced eye it was evident that the strata of the hills we passed presented much that would have been curious and interesting to the man of science.

In compliance with some strong recommendations I had received, I diverged from the road to visit

* This taste appears to have been shown by the oldest witch recorded in history, the witch who at the behest of Saul evoked the shade of the prophet Samuel. The picturesque name of her dwelling, En-dor, which signifies "the perpetual fountain," suggests those images of natural beauty which have been always most highly appreciated by Oriental nations.

Mr. Eccroyd, a gentleman who bears a high character for probity, intelligence, and benevolent feeling. He received me very kindly, and, to my apologies for intrusion, replied that I had brought with me two capital introductions—a benevolent purpose and an Irish accent. The distress of the country was of course the principal subject of conversation, particularly in relation to the condition of the hand-loom weavers, who form a very large proportion of the surrounding population. I regret that I cannot state the conversation minutely, for, unfortunately, I find that short-hand notes, taken in pencil while travelling in a gig over a rough road, are very difficult to be deciphered. He led me, however, to doubt the correctness of the opinion which I had formed, that the distress of the hand-loom weavers was mainly attributable to their entering into competition with the power-loom. The facts which shook my belief were, that the number of hand-loom weavers is now greater than ever it was, and that power has not yet been applied to the manufacture of a great variety of fabrics on which the hand-loom weavers are employed. From others I had previously heard, what, to a certain extent, I believe to be true, that power-loom cloth must in a great degree be regarded as a new fabric, which finds out a market for itself without interfering with any others. Granting that my theory was false, the distressed condition of the hand-loom weavers remained to be explained. My attention was

directed to two circumstances, which had not previously entered so largely into my calculations as I am now convinced that they ought to have done: first, the competition of the foreign hand-loom weaver, over whom the English operative in this branch of industry possesses none of the advantages arising from the employment of machinery and power, which are the great source of our superiority in other trades. Furthermore, weaving is a trade easily learned, and it can be carried on by persons who are too weak and feeble to work at other employments. An instance was mentioned of some Irish labourers who had come over as reapers, but, failing to obtain harvest-work, had turned to hand-loom weaving. Now, the rate of wages in any given occupation will be measured by the feeblest and not by the strongest of the workmen engaged in it. If, as is the case in many trades, it should so happen that the same task can be performed both by a man and a child, it is far more likely that the man must fall to the child's wages than that the child shall rise to the man's. I expressed my surprise that, under these circumstances, the hand-loom weavers did not betake themselves to other occupations. Mr. Eccroyd showed that this was out of their power, because under present circumstances there are not labour and wages so abundant in any one occupation in the country to absorb and supply a new horde of immigrants. He instanced the manufacture of *mousselines-de-laine*,

the introduction of which he regarded as a national calamity, because it at first promised so well that it attracted hordes of weavers, who obtained very good payment for two or three years, but, in consequence of their competition with the foreigner and with each other, were now reduced to accept a rate of wages which was very barely sufficient to keep body and soul together.

You will be amused with an incident which occurred at this stage of the conversation. Mr. Eccroyd, with the usual English love for contraction, called the article *laines*, and I somehow or other got it into my head that he referred to the narrow lanes which I had casually mentioned before. For some time we were talking at cross purposes, he referring to the economic, and I to the sanatory condition of the people. It was several minutes before I got right; and as I did not think it necessary to explain, I fear that my instructor formed a very unfavourable notion of the comprehension of his pupil.

I was very anxious to see this gentleman's sister, Miss Eccroyd, whose praise was literally in all the houses in the neighbourhood. She has devoted her moderate income and all the energies of her life to elevating the condition of the poor; not merely relieving their physical necessities, but remedying their moral wants by affectionate instruction and kind remonstrance. Her advice is more valued than her alms; for she listens to the tale of improvidence, and

even vice, without administering the stern rebuke or the grave reproof, acting in the true spirit of her Master's example, when he said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." It is no wonder that success attends the teachings of so beneficent an instructress: in the neighbouring village of Marsden, I heard of husbands that she had recalled from extravagance, and children that she had rescued from profligacy. It is unlikely that I shall ever meet her in this world, but my ardent prayer is that I may be deemed worthy of admission to the same place that she will occupy in another state of existence.

Returning to the road, we resumed our journey to Colne. The town is romantically situated on the summit of an eminence, surrounded by ranges of hills. The intervening valleys are richly cultivated, and contain some fine wood, which is probably a remnant of old Pendle Forest. The gentleman to whom I was furnished with a letter of introduction, requesting that he would aid me in my investigations, was unfortunately absent from home, and I was therefore compelled to devise a course of investigation for myself. The plan which I adopted here I have since invariably followed, and I am persuaded that it is the best mode of arriving at the truth. I went to the market-place, and addressed myself to the most intelligent-looking of the many idle operatives by whom it was crowded. I asked him to guide me to the streets where the unemployed workpeople resided, that I

might see with my own eyes the condition to which they had been reduced. As I had never been in this part of the country before, it was impossible for me to select specimens, and I took care that my guide should not, for, though he led to the streets, I took the houses at random. In all I visited eighty-three dwellings, selected at hazard. They were destitute of furniture, save old boxes for tables, and stools, or even large stones, for chairs; the beds were composed of straw and shavings, sometimes with torn pieces of carpet or packing canvass for a covering, and sometimes without any kind of covering whatever. The food was oatmeal and water for breakfast; flour and water, with a little skimmed milk, for dinner; oatmeal and water again for a third supply, with those who went through the form of eating three meals a-day. I was informed in fifteen families that their children went without the "blue milk," or milk from which the cream had been taken, on alternate days. I was an eye-witness to children appeasing the cravings of the stomach by the refuse of decayed vegetables in the root-market. I saw a woman in the very last stage of extenuation suckling an infant, which could scarcely draw a single drop of nutriment from her exhausted breast. I inquired the child's age?—Fifteen months. Why was it not weaned?—Another mouth would be added to the number of those for whom the present supply of oatmeal was insufficient. I was told that there had been several instances of death by sheer

starvation. On asking why application had not been made to the parish for relief, I was informed that they were persons from agricultural districts, who, on committing an act of vagrancy, would be sent to their parishes, and that they had rather endure anything, in the hope of some manufacturing revival, than return to the condition of farm-labourers, from which they had emerged. This was a fact perfectly new to me, and at the first blush utterly incredible; but I asked the neighbours in two of the instances quoted, in the absence of my guide, and without their having a suspicion of my having had any previous conversation on the subject, and they not only confirmed the story, but seemed to consider any appearance of scepticism a mark of prejudice or ignorance.

The comments which were made on this statement, when it appeared in print, induced me to make further inquiries upon the subject. In Manchester I met two, and in Stockport four, operatives out of employment, who had migrated as beggars from the north to the south, because they had been incorrectly told that the agricultural poor and the agricultural districts were not so badly off as the manufacturing poor and the manufacturing districts. Since my return to London I have conversed with many of the operatives who were singing or proclaiming their misery in the streets. I have, so far as I was able, tested their statements by applying for information to gentlemen connected with the localities which they

mentioned, and I am forced to say, as the result of my labours, that the state of the agricultural labourer is worse than that of the operative. There is the same amount of destitution—greater there could not possibly be; but there is not the same amount of respectability. All parties agreed that the agricultural labourer, having been for a longer period on the verge of pauperism, and having far less of the spirit of independence than the operative, feels also less reluctance to have recourse to mendicity, and less degraded by being a beggar. The statements made to me cannot be repeated: they are too shocking and too disgusting. The stern endurance, the moral power, the high sense of propriety and moral dignity, which to a great extent have borne up and still bear up the operatives of Lancashire in this season of their suffering, are wanting in the midland and southern counties. There mendicity and demoralisation are advancing with rapid strides, and are moving onwards with a still increasing velocity. Hitherto the manufacturing towns have absorbed the surplus labourers from the agricultural county; but the drain is now choked, and the stream, driven backwards to its source, threatens a fearful overflow, which may sweep away the very elements of civilisation.

I find that the same view has been taken of the state of the agricultural labourers by a writer in the last number of the 'Edinburgh Review.' The only comment I shall offer is this,—After the intense misery which I have described, and more of which I have

still to describe, what in the name of the Most Merciful must be the *worse* condition from which those pinched and starving sufferers still shrink with horror!

And here let me, once for all, answer an objection which has been not unfrequently started when I have made these and similar statements in conversation. It has been said that I have taken these accounts of the misery of the poor from the mouths of the poor; and I have been asked if I can place implicit reliance on their declarations. My Lord, at once and unhesitatingly I reply that I do believe the poor. I will not condescend to appeal, as I well might, to such irrefragable evidence as the haggard form, the sunken eye, the hollow cheek, and the faded lip; I rest my case entirely on the word of the poor man himself: in Lancashire, at least, he does not and he will not lie. He knows nothing of the whining cant of imposture; the statement of his case is open, candid, and manly. At the moment he makes it he feels, and he lets you see that he feels, his perfect equality with you in the eyes of his Creator: his entire tone, aspect, and bearing give testimony to his veracity—"a confirmation strong as proof of holy writ." I do believe the poor man; and he who disbelieves, or affects to disbelieve him, must either be sadly ignorant or something worse. The cry of misery ringing in my ears is real, or else there is no such thing as reality in the universe.

I must add, that all the places and persons I visited

in Colne were scrupulously clean. Their misery was fearful, but it had nothing which could offend the most fastidious. The children were in rags, but they were not in filth, and patching had been continued until the material was no longer able to hold the thread. There were two boys, sons of a widow, one of eleven and one of nine; between both a decent suit could be mustered, and they went to the Sunday-school on alternate Sundays. The hay, straw, and shavings, spread as a substitute for a bed on the floor, were confined with boards and stones: the rest of the floor was kept clean and sweet. In no single instance was I asked for relief: a sixpence given to one of the children was not refused, but it was never solicited. Nearly all gave descriptions of a former state of prosperity, such as I had witnessed at Hollywood; and never shall I forget the agony with which a young widow described her parting with a wooden clock which her late husband had given her on the day of her marriage. I never before saw poverty which inspired respect, and misery which demanded involuntary homage.

From the excellent clergyman of the town I learned that, out of a population of 53,000, no less than 13,000 were receiving parish relief; that the poor-rates had risen from 3*s*. to 10*s*. in the pound; that the relief granted was deemed by the paupers so inadequate to their wants, that the relieving officer in one district was obliged to be protected by a military guard; and

that the general ruin was fast absorbing the shopkeepers of Colne and the dairy-farmers in the neighbourhood. I went into several of the shops: the same tale was told by all; they saw nothing before them but bankruptcy and ruin.

It must be added that Chartism, and particularly the phase of it which threatens an appeal to physical force, appears to be advancing with fearful rapidity in this part of the country. More than twenty said, "We used to think that something better would turn up, but we have waited so long that hope itself is worn out: we must do something for ourselves, because those above us will never do anything for us." Connected with this subject, I may remark on the rapidity with which political intelligence appears to be promulgated in this district. The mail bringing the account of the debate on Mr. Ferrand's proposed grant had arrived that morning: I had not seen a paper, but I received a very full account of the debate in a house at the outskirts of the town, which contained neither bed, chair, nor table; and I heard it mentioned in a score of places besides.

On my return from Colne I entered into conversation with some of the operatives who were breaking stones upon the road, their wages being paid out of the relief fund collected in London. The amount of wages was 9*s*. per week, and no person so employed received any parochial assistance, whatever might be the amount of his family. Miserable as was this

pittance, the poor fellows were grateful for the employment. I did not hear one complain that the grant of relief was accompanied with the condition of work, though the labour was one to which they were obviously unaccustomed, and at which some of them exhibited as much awkwardness as I should have done myself. You will not condemn the profound respect which I felt for such a noble picture of humanity—a respect all the greater from an involuntary doubt whether, under similar circumstances, it would not far transcend my powers of imitation.

On my return to Burnley I passed through Marsden. Externally the village wore the same aspect as Hollywood, and I hoped to obtain some pleasing picture which would relieve the recollections of the horrors I had seen in Colne. I was mistaken. Externally and internally everything was scrupulously clean, but the houses and their inmates had neither clothes, food, nor furniture. I must add a noble trait:—I went into the house of a widow, who had three children: she was one of the most intelligent, naturally polite persons I ever saw. She told me that the earnings of herself and two of her children amounted together to about eleven shillings per week; and that, though they had once been better off, they felt themselves comparatively happy when they contrasted their condition with that of their neighbours. I remained with her some time, and, on parting, offered her a shilling for the trouble I had given. "No, sir," she replied, "I cannot

take your money while there are many so much worse around me: allow me to send it to a family suffering from sickness as well as want;" and forthwith she sent her daughter with the shilling to the house whose misery she had been describing.

I found that one part of Marsden, however, had suffered comparatively little in the crisis: it was a mining district, and the colliers continued in full employment. Here I heard some fine illustrations of that which had been very often forced upon my attention during these investigations—the unsuspected extent of the charity of the poor to the poor. The widow mentioned in the last paragraph was a conspicuous example of how much could be done with a little. I heard anecdotes of her sending her children to help the unfortunate in their household affairs, of her inviting the children of the distressed to share the meals of her own family, and of her readiness to sit by the bed of sickness and smooth the pillow of death. If I remembered her name, I would record it; and yet I know not whether I should be quite justified in pointing her out, for hers was no exceptional case. Throughout the entire of the district I found the most distressed dwell invariably on the assistance which they received from their neighbours. "We must have perished but for the charity of our neighbours" was a phrase which met me everywhere; and invariably I found, upon inquiry, that their neighbours were very little better off than themselves.

It was necessary to make some halt at Burnley to

bait the horses. In the yard of the inn I found several farmers, it being market-day, and I entered at once into conversation with them. One is so accustomed to hear farmers talk of "the badness of the times" at all times, that their complaints have long since failed to excite attention. The late Mr. Huskisson used to say that he believed farmers would not be satisfied with a year of the greatest abundance, and corn at a famine price. These men, however, differed from the generality of farmers, for they were all corn-law repealers—a circumstance which is perhaps explained by the fact that few if any of them were corn-growers. They said that they were dairy-farmers, and that they depended on the sale of their milk, butter, and cheese. Their prosperity was thus identified with that of the manufacturers—a secret, however, which they seemed to have detected very recently: one, at least, declared that he had not found it out until the closing of a mill in his neighbourhood suddenly deprived him of all his best customers. One of the party was a native of the southern part of Cheshire, and I endeavoured to obtain from him some grounds of calculation for estimating the difference of value between a corn-farm and a dairy-farm. Anything like accuracy of estimate was unattainable. "He preferred a dairy-farm, because he had the money in his pocket every day before his dinner. Since these bad times came he had been induced to turn to the making of cheese, as there was

little or no demand for fresh milk and butter. The cheese manufacture, however, had proved a losing speculation, and he would have no more to do with it; that he wouldn't. But what he was to do he knew no more than ——" some local idiom which I did not understand. These farmers also said that several dairy-farms had been recently thrown up in the neighbourhood, and in a still greater number of instances at Saddleworth, which could not be again let even at a very considerable reduction of price. My Cheshire friend clenched this observation by stating, that, "If he were once out of the mess, he wouldn't have a dairy-farm in this country at no price."

I made a détour on my return from Burnley to Sunnyside, for the purpose of visiting Padiham, a township destitute of mills or factories, which, nevertheless, was described to me as one of the most distressed districts in the entire county. Just outside Burnley I met a group of idle operatives engaged in discussion, and I at once joined them. They were discussing the speeches made at an open-air meeting of several thousands of the unemployed operatives in this and the adjoining district, which had been held some days previously. Declaring that my object was only to gain information, I joined the circle, and found that I was in a company of block-printers, pretty nearly unanimous on the evil results of machinery. One of the loudest was a native of Padiham, which I was about to visit, and it was rather amusing

to find that, while he inveighed against cylinder-printing, he still more loudly denounced the landed proprietor, or, I rather think, proprietors, of Padiham, who would not permit a factory or cotton-mill to be erected on his ground. On this latter point the man spoke feelingly and well; indeed, he was the only one of his class whom I ever met with such clear notions on the subject. He said that those who had money invested in a mill would work it at a loss rather than let the invested capital run to ruin, while employers who lived "from hand to mouth," such as gave work to the hand-loom weavers in Padiham, were "knocked up" at every temporary crisis, and left the hands starving. From this digression he returned to the grievance of cylinder-printing, and rather abruptly demanded my opinion on the subject. I said that, however much the invention of cylinder-printing was to be lamented, the facts of its having been invented and of the art being very generally known were undeniable: hence the only question to be decided was, should England retain the art, or make a present of that entire branch of industry to foreign nations? This view of the case seemed to be a startling novelty to most of my auditors. It was received as most of the unexpected and disagreeable truths are received by those whose prejudices they offend; that is, by audible murmurings without a definite answer. At length the principal orator said, in a tone which intimated that contradiction on my

part would not be the most prudent thing in the world, "It was England first set up the cylinder-printing, and all the world imitated her; if England abolished the practice, perhaps all the world would do the same!" I thought that the value of his "perhaps" might be safely left to be estimated by the most stupid of his audience, and, bidding the party farewell—a salutation which, I must add, was reciprocated with real good feeling—I pursued my journey.

I found Padiham equal to Colne in destitution, but infinitely worse in the desperation of its inhabitants. Moral endurance, universal or nearly so in Colne, was here scarcely to be found. At one house which I visited, the head of the family, on my giving sixpence to his poor sick child, said, with a sarcastic sneer, "I am sure you are poor yourself, or you would not be charitable." In Colne, in Bolton, and in Burnley there was generally an absence of anger and violence in the recitals of suffering, but here teeth were set, hands were clenched, and curses of fearful bitterness pronounced with harrowing energy. "We wait but for the word to begin," was stated broadly and openly by every hand-loom weaver or block-printer I met in the place, and the tone in which this declaration was uttered gave startling evidence of its sincerity. There was a reckless desperation about the aspect of misery in Padiham which was unlike anything I ever saw in Lancashire, but I doubt if it be more dangerous than

the steady and fixed resolution to obtain a redress of real or imaginary grievances which I found among the people in Colne and Marsden. The destitution in all these places is much alike; in all you may hear the same declaration that "things are worsening:" in all, too, you may find something like a determination to effect a change; but in Padiham and its neighbourhood there are superadded aspirations for vengeance, and threats of retaliating wrongs on the head of supposed oppressors. In Padiham I heard a man in the open streets go beyond even the violence of Burnley, and, amidst the cheers of some scores, express an eager hope that "Captain Swing would take command of the manufacturing districts."

I was again very late on the road: it was nearly midnight when we returned to Sunnyside.

LETTER VI.

Rosendale Forest, ——, 1842.

For the first time since I left home, the sun had for some hours risen upon the earth before I came downstairs this morning. In prosperous times a lover of his kind could have enjoyed few greater pleasures than that which would have been offered to him by the spectacle presented by a Sunday in one of the forest villages. Infidelity and Socialism have made great progress in Manchester, and some other towns of Southern Lancashire, but the plague has as yet very partially extended into the Forest. It was delightful to see the crowds of well-dressed individuals and families coming from their cottages, and proceeding to their respective places of worship, with the aspect and demeanour of persons who felt that they were engaged in an act of solemn duty. I was informed that, in seasons of distress, the Foresters will sacrifice everything before they part with their Sunday clothes; and that they would cheerfully starve during the entire week, in order to make a decent

appearance when "they go up to the House of the Lord." They belong to a great variety of sects, a small proportion only being members of the Church, the sobriety of our ordinances being probably too tame for the fiery energy and enthusiasm which forms so conspicuous an element in their character. To the same cause I should be disposed to attribute the disproportionate amount of congregational singing in their public worship, and the tendency to rant and extravagance which is very observable in their extempore prayers. Having always considered sincerity of every kind a most valuable quality, I cannot bring myself to condemn the enthusiasm of the Foresters, although I deem it excessive: it is easier to tame down this heat than to animate apathy and coldness. I was much struck by the attention of the operatives to their children: the little urchins were all clean and very neatly dressed, which is not to be wondered at, as the benevolent proprietor of the print-works at Crashaw Booth supplies his workpeople with the *fents*, or overlengths of cloth, at a price rather less than the cost of production. It was amusing to see the imps mimicking the solemn air and steady step of their parents, but every now and then yielding to some sudden ebullition of youthful gaiety, and indulging in a frisky gambol which sadly disturbed the grave uniformity of the march. While enjoying this scene, the recollection of the misery which I had seen on the preceding day came over my mind, with

somewhat of the same effect as a heavy and dark thunder-cloud suddenly obscuring sunshine.

"Alas! regardless of their doom,
The little victims play;
No sense have they of ills to come,
No cares beyond to-day."

Twenty-four hours had not elapsed since I had seen the fearful picture of the Elegiac Prophet realized before mine eyes: "The tongue of the sucking-child cleaveth to the mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dung-hills." I am not a Lancastrian, but I have learned to reverence, to respect, and to love this noble people, exhibiting the highest attributes of humanity in the midst of their unmerited sufferings,—

"More dear in their sorrow, their gloom, and their showers,
Than the rest of the world in its sunniest hours."

From my very soul, I could exclaim with Jeremiah, "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine?—when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured into their mother's bosom!"—*Quousque, Domine?*

Under the influence of these feelings, I resolved to anticipate the present publication, and send a letter simply describing what I had seen and heard to the 'Morning Chronicle.' That letter has not been without effect, for it bore the stamp and impress of reality;—no human being would give me credit for the creative genius which could invent such unparalleled scenes. I have repeated these statements again, and am perfectly willing to give them in evidence at the bar of either House of Parliament.

At church in the evening I was somewhat surprised to find a young clergyman, addressing an operative congregation, deliver a *Concio ad Clerum*, instead of a *Concio ad Populum*: it was a very learned and clever academic thesis on the system of doctrines set forth in the Oxford Tracts, and might perhaps have been tolerably intelligible in a College Chapel. But to all the congregation, with perhaps the single exception of myself, it was not one whit more edifying than if it had been delivered in Hebrew. Ridicule on sacred subjects is too dangerous for me to report the misapprehensions which I overheard among the congregation as they conversed respecting the sermon on their return from church.

In the evening I strolled through the village and admired the orderly and peaceful demeanour of its inhabitants. In some houses the parents were reading

the Bible to their families; in others the neighbours had assembled to sing hymns together; in more than one the voice of prayer was heard supplicating the Author of Mercy to have compassion upon the suffering nation. The speakers used the sentiments, if not the very words, of the Elegiac Prophet: "Thou, O Lord! remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation: wherefore dost thou forget us ever, and forsake us so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." How naturally the fine Orientalisms of the Old Testament identify themselves with deep and highly-wrought feelings. In our days we are too apt to ridicule the excessive use of Scriptural phraseology by the Puritans and the Covenanters: in our tame age we cannot comprehend the perfect sincerity of these men: they were thoroughly in earnest, they ever meant what they said. Let me add that their spirit still survives in the country; and that I have often heard among the operatives the sentiments which Campbell has embodied in the well-known lines,

> "We're the sons of sires that baffled
> Crown'd and mitred tyranny;
> They defied the sword and scaffold
> For their birthrights:—so will we."

The following day was the last which I had to spend in the Forest of Rosendale, at least during my present tour. I devoted the early part of the morn-

ing to an examination of the print-works at Crashaw Booth, which are among the most extensive in the county. They exhibit a most interesting combination of chemical skill united with mechanical ingenuity: it would be an interesting record if we possessed a history of calico-printing since the first experiments were tried by the grandfather of the present premier with his pattern of a parsley-leaf, in the old farm-house near Blackburn.—"Parsley Peel," as he is almost universally called, was a public benefactor, and, from all I can learn, a most remarkable man. The traditions relating to him are very vague and remote; the generation which remembered him has passed away. It is indeed singular to find how rapidly those worthies to whose ingenuity Lancashire is indebted for its unexampled prosperity are sinking into oblivion. The names of Crompton, of Horrocks, &c., have ceased to be "familiar in men's mouths as household words:" it is certainly not creditable to the men of Lancashire that they allow the merits of such men "to rest in cold obstruction;" but in brisk times they were probably too busy in pushing forward to regard such matters, and now they can neither attend to this or anything else save the desperate effort to keep hold of the reins, which they feel slipping from their hands.

What I had seen and heard at Burnley and Padiham rendered me anxious to discover the origin of the extraordinary violence and recklessness of the

block-printers, so unlike the manly endurance of the cotton-spinners and the patient submission of the hand-loom weavers. I was informed that their trade was regulated by a very rigorous and intractable union, which was in some way affiliated with the wildest societies of the most fanatical Chartists. It is impossible to exaggerate the reluctance which members of a union exhibit to speak about the "secrets of their prison-house," even though many of them feel it to be a "prison-house" of the most stringent and oppressive description. The sight of a pencil and note-book turns them into mute statues as effectually as if they had been shown the head of the Gorgon. Even when they can be got to speak on the subject in the open air, and in the absence of witnesses, their statements are made in whispers, as if they feared that some bird would convey the secret to their hidden rulers. Whether this is to be attributed to the rigidity of the tyranny exercised over them, or to the high sense of honour which is nowhere more remarkably combined with the associating spirit than in Lancashire, I am not able to determine. Some years ago my attention was directed to the circumstances of the great strike at Preston, by a paper which Mr. Henry Ashworth read to the Statistical Section at the Liverpool meeting of the British Association. On visiting that town at a subsequent period, I was perfectly astounded at the obstinate perseverance displayed by the operatives engaged in the

strike: they stood out with a stubborn and dogged resolution which never yielded a jot until famine and its attendant disease had wasted away every particle of their physical energies, and then they sank exhausted rather than conquered. I thought then, what I think now,—that this was a great and noble exhibition of moral principle, misdirected indeed, but capable under better guidance of producing the most glorious and beneficial results.

On the other hand, I have on various occasions received abundant evidence that the tyranny of Trades Unions is not a shade less cruel or less unscrupulous than that of Robespierre and the Jacobins. One evil of these pernicious institutions is patent: their advocates and representatives display a boldness of invention and a recklessness of assertion, such as I believe never had a parallel in any age of the world. Their motto is, and has been, *Calumniare fortiter, adhærebit aliquid*, or, in plain English, "Throw mud enough, and some of it will stick!" I speak what I know, and what I could if necessary prove, that the power of these dangerous men has been perilously increased by the court which was paid to them by men of rank and station who wished to employ them, and who did employ them, as their instruments to gain a partisan triumph over their political opponents. In the paction each party duped the other, but the Unionists were the wiser: they believed that the exclusion of moderate and conciliating men from parliament would

precipitate that terrible revolution which it is the first object of their thoughts and desire to bring about, and to the brink of which the nation has been brought much closer than any man would have believed possible two years ago.

> "But in these cases
> We still have judgment here; that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague the inventor."

These observations are wrung from me. During my whole life I have kept aloof from politics—clinging to my solitary belief that the intentions of all public men are honest and patriotic, and that the disputes between the great leaders of parties relate to means rather than ends. On the present occasion, having voluntarily undertaken a great public duty, the responsibility of which presses on me more heavily than I dare confess even to myself,—to state, through you, to my countrymen, the case of the manufacturers and operatives of Lancashire,—I should deem it an unpardonable crime if I uttered one word likely to hurt the personal feelings of any person. But the truth must not, and indeed cannot, be concealed: appeals have been made to the passions of the leaders of unions, their vanity has been flattered, their prejudices have been fostered, and their influence over their ignorant dupes perilously increased: — dangerous weapons have been placed in the hands of dangerous men;—but it is more than doubtful whether those who

have supplied the arms will be allowed to direct the blow. I heard a Chartist orator in Burnley loudly applauded when he united churches and mills in the same category, and expressed an ardent hope that both should be involved in one common conflagration.

The proprietor of the print-works at Crashaw Booth recently called his men together, and explained to them the reason which rendered it necessary that he should diminish the amount of employment, and work short time; he however offered to forego his resolution if they would consent to such an abatement in the rates of their piece-work as would give him a probable chance of escaping absolute loss. The men unanimously expressed their anxiety to accept the offer, but declared that it would be necessary previously to consult the union. An absolute prohibition was issued by the secret directors of the body, and most of the men are now working half-time, with every probability that the increasing pressure of the times will necessitate a reduction of wages into the bargain. From some information incidentally obtained I have reason to believe that the operatives in these unions are heavily mulcted by their leaders, who raise contributions under various social and political pretexts, always visionary and sometimes mischievous. It is not easy to discover what becomes of all the money which passes into the hands of delegates and other officers of trades unions, but I have heard of

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more than one curious exposure which seemed to prove that a traffic in agitation is a far more lucrative trade than is generally imagined.

The situation of the works at Crashaw Booth is very picturesque. They are in a valley on the margin of a mountain-stream. On the side of the adjoining hill stand the hall and pleasure-grounds of Sunnyside, behind which, on the very summit of the hill, rises the chimney of the works, to which the smoke passes through a tunnelled way, about the eighth of a mile in length. The isolated appearance of the chimney sending forth its clouds of smoke has a very singular effect: at some distance it might be mistaken for a beacon or signal-tower, as it is a very conspicuous object through a great extent of surrounding country.

In the evening I quitted Sunnyside, taking the road to Bury: on the way I had evidence of the extending and increasing number of trades involved in the general distress, for I met several groups of machine-makers wandering about in search of employment, and willing, in their own phrase, "to turn their hands to anything." It appeared that the iron-founding and machine-making trades did not feel the pressure of distress so early as the cotton manufacture, in consequence of the demand for locomotive engines produced by the opening of so many railroads both in England and on the Continent. That demand is now very nearly at an end: the English railroads

are pretty well supplied, and our refusal to take the only payment they can offer has driven the European nations and the Americans to manufacture for themselves. It is no consolation to thinking people that the English workmen have found employment in continental establishments; the artisans whom we have suffered to be thus exported were our tax-producers; to diminish their number, while that of the tax-consumers remains undiminished, is just as if a proprietor of bees should commence expelling all the working bees, while he retained the drones, for it is a demonstrable fact that far the greater part of the taxes in England is paid by the labouring class of the community.

I am induced to dwell upon this fact in consequence of a conversation which I had with two gentlemen, who were my companions in the railway carriage between Manchester and Birmingham. The conversation turned on my letter in the 'Morning Chronicle,' of which neither suspected me to be the writer, nor did I inform them on the subject. They discussed what ought to be done in the present alarming condition of affairs: one proposed emigration, the other desired a sharper remedy, expressing a wish that there should be an immediate outbreak, which would be put down by the strong arm of military force. I represented to both my unwillingness to see either remedy applied, from my natural reluctance to bear the additional taxation which must necessarily be im-

posed on all contributors to the expenditure of the nation, when so many of the best tax-producers in the nation were removed either by the shipping of the one or the bullets of the other. This appeared to them a new view of the case, and I record it because I fear that it will be equally new to a great many persons who pass for very clever people.*

On this and several former visits to Bury and its neighbourhood, I endeavoured to collect as much anecdotic information as I could respecting the late Sir Robert Peel, a man to whom I feel persuaded that his country has not done full justice. He had, to be sure, a princely fortune, but he has not had his proper meed of fame; and I see with regret a disposition to carp at his fame, particularly in the latest work on Lancashire, to which I have already referred. So far as I can judge from very varied communications, Sir Robert Peel belonged to a class of men equally valuable and unvalued; I mean those men who possess moderate talents, none of which rise above or fall below the average, but are all nicely proportioned and well harmonized together. Such a combination is generally called common sense, though it is about the most uncommon thing in the world. He was not an

* Censures have been passed on many of the magistrates for their reluctance to use lead and steel in suppressing the late commotions; the objectors ought to count the loss to the nation of every life which would have been sacrificed, and taken a lesson in humanity from the income-tax.

inventor, though he profited by inventions: this has been made the ground of attack by men who forget that an invention is of very little value until it receives a practical application. There is very little doubt that many excellent inventions have perished, simply because there was no Robert Peel to appreciate their practical value. Take for instance the power-loom: it was no doubt invented by the Rev. D. Cartwright in 1785, but it was very nearly half a century before it came into extensive use. Such might have been the fate of the spinning-jenny, or, at best, the process of invention might have stopped short with the "ball-in-the-wood wheels," had not Mr. Peel introduced it, with improvements, into his factory at Bury. He has been also blamed for largely employing infant labour:—on this I shall make no observation now, as I mean to devote a subsequent letter to the subject; and he has been assailed, like the Greggs and Ashworths of our own day, for having brought hands to his works from distant parts of the country. This should really be recorded amongst his highest merits: he raised many who were on the point of becoming outcasts into honest and useful members of society, and there are many families now residing in Lancashire sprung from those who were apparently the most hopeless of his importations. Thus he was not only prosperous himself, but he was—and he rejoiced in being—the source of prosperity to others.

I have had the opportunity of conversing with

several persons who had been in Sir Robert Peel's employment: all spoke of him with respect, and some with affection. He appears to have been very rigorous in enforcing discipline, which must have been necessary in the infancy of the factory system, and far more necessary than those who have succeeded to a trained generation of workmen can easily conceive. He was a very liberal patron to any persons who, after having been in his employment, set up in business for themselves, and, to the last hour of his life, he took a deep interest in their prosperous career. He was so generally liked by his workpeople that the majority of them, as I was informed, followed him when he migrated southwards from Lancashire. Although I have very little sympathy in his parliamentary career, I admire in his speeches a downrightness and manliness of feeling which leaves no person in ignorance of the speaker's object and purpose. Finally, if I entertained any doubts of his merits, they would have been removed by the high terms in which I have heard his name mentioned by one who is a niggard of praise, and of nothing else, Mr. Thomson, of Primrose, one of the most intelligent and right-minded men in the North of England.

The contributor to the 7th number of the 'Lancashire' has not limited his attack to Sir Robert Peel, but has involved in the same sweeping censure the great majority of the cotton manufacturers. Into their defence I will not enter. It needs not to dwell

upon their intelligence, their industry, and their enterprise, when the results are before my eyes in the most undeniable forms. *Monumentum si quæras, circumspice.*

I regret that my time did not allow of my repeating the visit which I paid last year to Haslingden, Accrington, Clitheroe, and the upper valley of the Ribble. But I was informed that distress had extended into these districts, and that Accrington especially was little, if at all, better off than Bolton. This was very painful intelligence to one who had seen the magnificent works erected in a locality which was not many years ago almost a perfect solitude, and had admired the fertility and verdure of fields which within the memory of living men were nothing better than moor and morass. Wherever I went, and whomsoever I met, the same sad uniformity was in every account I received. Distress was general in its extent, and increasing in its intensity. Among those who had suffered least there was a fearful looking forward to the future; and with those who had suffered long, moral principle was succumbing to the pressure of physical destitution. In the short interval of my tour in Rossendale several additional mills had closed; more were expected to follow, and have followed; the municipal and parochial authorities in Bolton and Stockport had begun to calculate the period when the complete exhaustion of every resource would compel them to abandon their functions, and hand over

the places to the government. No stronger proof can be given of the effect which these tidings have produced than that many moderate men, who have hitherto abstained from taking a prominent part, have discussed the propriety of severing the duchy of Lancaster, in its financial administration, from the realm of England, and placing the palatine county in bond. There is no doubt that they could do so with profit, and even pay to the government more than the present amount of revenue, if they were not obliged to close the doors of their warehouses against their best customers, and declare to the purchasers of their commodities, "We are compelled to refuse the only payment which you have to offer."

LETTER VII.

The Oaks, Turton, near Bolton, ——, 1842.

It is my purpose in this letter to explain, as clearly as I can, what may be called the social economy of a cotton-factory. For this purpose it will not be necessary to give any account of the processes of manufacture; but there is one which deserves to be mentioned on account of its connexion with the fiscal regulations respecting the import of corn. It is called "dressing," and consists in the application of a strong flour-paste by the dressing-frame to the warp-yarns, before the process of weaving is commenced.

There are about 100,000 dressing-frames in the three kingdoms, each of which consumes on an average five pounds weight of flour weekly, so that the total amount of flour consumed in power-loom weaving alone exceeds twenty-five millions of pounds, or ninety thousand loads. I have not been able to form any estimate of the amount of flour used by the poor hand-loom weavers in dressing their yarn, but I allude to the circumstance for the purpose of showing that the agricultural labourers employed in the production of this flour ought in justice to be added to

the amount of population dependent for support on the cotton manufacture. It is also evident that the high price of corn is injurious, not only in enhancing the cost of food, but also in levying a tax on the materials of production. In the case of the hand-loom weavers this tax is levied on a class already very much depressed, and for which great sympathy is felt, or at least expressed, by zealous advocates of the corn-laws.

In cotton-spinning the amount of effect produced by machinery is out of all proportion greater than that resulting from manual labour. In almost all the processes, save that of mule-spinning, the operatives are rather tenters of machinery than actual labourers, and even in that instance the self-acting mule has greatly diminished the importance of the spinner. I know of no instance in which capital has given so much of its assistance and intrusted so much of its wealth to the hands of industry. But it has not, I think, been observed that the wages of the operative are increased in nearly the same proportion as the aid which he receives from machinery. When I first saw the process of *batting*,* and witnessed the great expenditure of strength which the incessant wielding of the switch required, I felt that, if labour was to be remunerated according to the fatigue it imposes, the batters ought to be the persons best paid in the factory; but on inquiry I found that they did not receive half the wages of the tenters or superintend-

* Cleaning raw cotton by beating it with switches.

ents of the drawing-frame, who had only to watch over the work done for them by machinery. Of course I am aware that trained skill will always bring a higher price than brute strength, but I never before was so forcibly impressed with the importance of the capital which rendered that skill available. I had before me an undeniable proof that machinery increased the wages and lessened the fatigue of the operative. It must, however, be borne in mind that the acquisition of skill in any special occupation has a direct tendency to unfit the operative for every other employment; and thus, while it increases his comfort and strengthens his position so long as there is a demand for his labour, it seriously aggravates his misery in a season of distress.

There are persons who speak of wages as if they could be fixed by some combination of the masters on the one hand or the operatives on the other, and as if the price of labour, like that of every other commodity, did not depend on the relations between demand and supply. I once asked the opinion of an operative on this subject, and his answer was a complete explication of the problem. He replied, "When two masters are looking for one man, wages will be high; but when two men are looking for one master, they will be low: and that's all about the matter." It would be well if the political economy of fustian-jacket could be generally diffused through broad-cloth. There is, however, this difference be-

tween labour and other commodities—that there is always a more pressing necessity for industry to sell than for capital to buy. Labour is the most perishable of articles: it is measured by time, and every hour it remains unemployed is so much of its stock absolutely destroyed. Now, machinery tends to equalize this disparity between the employer and the employed. When capital is invested (and we have already seen that the cotton-manufacture demands a vast amount of investment), it, too, must be worked or be destroyed. The employer is thus subjected to a portion of the urgency which presses on the operative; and this equality of conditions, when they meet in the labour-market, must greatly contribute to the establishment of equitable relations between them. It is easy to comprehend that the employer can make his own terms, when it is nearly indifferent to him whether he shall give employment or not; but he is in a far different position when he must either find hands or see his property go to ruin. My friend, Eugene Buret, has dwelt at great length on the disadvantages of the operative as the seller of a perishable commodity; but the compensating necessity on the proprietor of invested capital to purchase the means of working it, even at some disadvantage, has escaped his notice.

Another circumstance deserves to be taken into consideration. The amount of wages actually paid forms but a very small element in the cost-price of

yarn. Were it possible for a mill-owner to reduce the wages of his operatives to the miserable pittance earned by agricultural labourers, the effect on his net profits would be far less appreciable than his gain from any improvement in machinery which would require him to pay at a higher rate for skill and intelligence in superintendence. The question at present at issue in the manufacturing districts is not between high wages and low wages, but between employment and no employment. The factory system has powers within itself to make an equitable settlement of wages; but in the absorption of its production, which must clearly determine the question of employment, the system is subject to the perturbating influence of government and legislation which may either open or close foreign markets.

My precise object is to show that the factory system directly makes it the interest of the manufacturer that his operatives should not only be good workmen, but good men; and that he is stringently coerced by circumstances to be very attentive to the health, the intelligence, and the morals of the persons he employs. It will be no answer to my argument that some manufacturers have neglected these points of interest and duty: I know that they have, but I further know that they have paid dearly for their delinquency. The luxuries of vice have been purchased by ruin. In all ages of the world, and in all classes of society, profligacy has been found to interfere with

the right exercise of the calculating powers; but their business requires the manufacturers to be tolerably shrewd mathematicians, and they rarely fail to work out a moral problem, when the rules for its solution are very obviously "according to Cocker." They are not a body of saints, but neither are they a body of blockheads; and they are not very likely to be gratuitous profligates for the mere purpose of becoming martyrs.

Let us first take the question of health. Now, there is nothing more certain than that bad health will produce bad work, both in quantity and quality. It would be ruinous to resolve the injured articles into their original state. Ground may be fresh ploughed, and land a second time sown; but there has been no instance of re-twisting yarn or re-weaving calico. Hence it is the direct interest of employers to do all in their power to preserve their operatives from disease. It must be borne in mind that those engaged in factories are not mere labourers: they are strictly and truly *educated* labourers, whose training has cost something. The proprietor cannot treat them like negroes: he cannot, when he has worked out one, go into the market and purchase a fresh supply; and consequently, if he permits any waste of human life, he consents to a waste of his own capital: no small portion of it is invested in the lives of his workmen, and he is only securing the safety of his outlay when he bestows attention on their physical condition. He

is interested in their forming habits of cleanliness, for their neglect of necessary ablution would spoil the productions of their hands; and I need not say that personal neatness is always conducive to the preservation of health. Neither the cotton-spinner nor the calico-printer can take a host of Irish immigrants to gather in his harvest, and dismiss them, when their task is complete, without bestowing a thought on whence they came or whither they are gone. Moreover, in almost every mill there are some peculiarities of arrangement and construction which a stranger would waste some time in learning, and which, therefore, increase the proprietor's interest in the preservation of his old hands. I have found, in many mills, operatives whose length of continuance in the same employment proved that they looked upon their masters with all the confidence, if not with all the affection, of old servants in an ancient household; and I know the sturdiness of Lancashire too well to believe that such continuous service could have been procured by wages alone.

It is sometimes said that the labour of tenters of machinery is so purely mechanical, that no opportunity is afforded for the exercise of intelligence or ingenuity. In truth, this evil is infinitely greater in those branches of industry which are not aided by machinery, but depend chiefly on manual dexterity, for in them the man becomes the machine. There are frequent opportunities in a mill for the exercise of skill, ingenuity, and contrivance. These qualities,

when rare, bring a very high price; and it is therefore the interest of proprietors to diffuse them amongst their workmen. I know that there are some in Lancashire who do not see the advantage of educating the operative; like many in other places, they complain "the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe." It is necessary that their kibes should be galled, in order to make them get on a little faster. I have, however, found that those men who undervalue the diffusion of intelligence among the workmen are persons who have been badly educated themselves, and who are therefore afraid of being outstripped by those whom they are accustomed to regard as their inferiors. They have taken a new view of Lord Bacon's aphorism, "Knowledge is power;" being so convinced of its truth, that, in order to keep power in their own hands, they resolve to withhold knowledge from others. I must say, however, that this is a small and decreasing class in Lancashire; at least, so far as a person can judge from open avowals of opinion. It may be that there, as in other places, many persons have taken a part in the great educational movement of our day, who are sincerely sorry that it was ever begun, and who would retard its progress if they could. The only point which I have to consider is, that the diffusion of the Factory System has created a larger demand than previously existed for intelligence and contrivance, and that the demand has begun to produce the supply.

It is a common error to suppose that very large capitals invest the possessors with a disproportionate power over the rights of labour. Experience has everywhere shown that great capitalists are more equitable and more merciful employers than persons of limited fortune. Ramon de la Sagra, in his excellent work on Cuba, has shown that the negroes on the estates of wealthy planters are generally so well treated that they do not sensibly feel the deprivation of liberty; while the slaves of emancipated blacks, or of speculative adventurers, who with small capitals and fictitious credit undertake the management of plantations, are tasked to the very utmost limits of human endurance. So far as my observations have yet gone, I have found that the equity of the relations between the employers and the employed is disturbed by the want of capital, and not by the command of it. Men of limited means must suspend employment in every season of depression; they are in a position where there is little to lose and much to gain; they can therefore afford to risk the penalties of oppression, to speculate on the improvidence of their workmen, to make unfair deductions from their wages, and not to be over-scrupulous in the purchase of raw materials. The same law holds good in other pursuits. The tenant who has invested large capital in the improvement of the soil will take good care not to exhaust the land; while he who has not the means for proper outlay is forced to impoverish the soil, in order to obtain

profit, or perhaps subsistence. Let me, however, at once say that this difference must mainly be attributed to position. If fortune favours the speculator, and enables him to become a capitalist, he will be forced by the circumstances of his new position to abandon the vices of speculation.

In estimating the social influences of the Factory System, it is of importance that we should take into account the great disproportion between the amount of its fixed and its floating capital. I am afraid to venture on an estimate of the capital which is permanently invested on the banks of the Irwell, for I am sure that the valley of this little stream possesses more wealth than that of the largest river in Europe. But the wealth invested in a factory is utterly inapplicable to any other purpose: it must be worked for the special manufacture to which it was originally devoted, or be wholly lost. The machinery of a cotton-mill cannot be applied to grinding corn, cutting nails, or sawing timber: it will spin yarn, and it will do nothing else. The landed proprietor may change from tillage to pasturage, and from pasturage to tillage: the merchant may quit the tobacco trade for the timber trade, and career round the globe to place after place without injuring his capital by such a transfer of exports and imports: but the investment in a factory once made can never be withdrawn: it must exist as it is, or it must perish.

From this condition of factory investment there

results a great degree of certainty for the employment of the operative. A landlord may clear his estate with profit, but a factory capitalist cannot discharge his operatives without ruin. He must often work his mills at a positive loss, or he will not only lose the interest on the capital he has invested, but also deteriorate the capital itself, as rust destroys his machinery, and the moth consumes his materials. In any temporary crisis the factory labourer may generally calculate on escaping with comparative safety; but if the crisis be prolonged, if the losses on production begin to exceed the amount of losses which would result from deterioration of property, the consequences will be rendered more fatal, and the ruin more extensive, by the very circumstances which have delayed its arrival. The manufacturers must continue to produce, or cease to exist: they will go on to the very last, hoping against hope, forcing a sale here and making a sacrifice there, until, in the continued depression, their capitals are exhausted, their stocks are thrown upon a market already overcrowded, the price of all similar productions at once falls far below all possible chance of remuneration, and those whose capitals were still available are unable to sustain the additional shock of depreciation, and all are involved in one common ruin. Thus, while the factory operative has the best chances for a continued demand for his labour, he is also menaced with the worst evils whenever that demand may be withdrawn.

Another result from the large amount of capital invested in factories is the creation of a perceived identity of interest between the employer and the employed. In all cases there exists such identity of interest between a proprietor and the labourers whose industry renders his property valuable, but in countless instances this identity escapes the ken of both, as the relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland too often and too notoriously testify. The proprietor of an estate is conscious that if his tenants go away they will leave the land behind them, and the tenant, with the same consciousness, is often inclined to exhaust the soil for a single crop; both forget their mutual obligations, or rather, several circumstances combine to hide the reciprocity of their relations from each. This cannot be the case in a factory: the proprietor feels every instant his dependence upon those whom he employs, and his workmen can never hide from themselves that the mill and the machinery must have been provided for them, or else they could not have found a market for their industry. I do not say that all the relations between the employers and the employed are in every case perfectly equitable, but assuredly the tendency of the factory system is to make them so, for every injustice is immediately discovered, and its impolicy at once detected.

In fact, all the persons engaged in a mill are subject to the control of a power able to mediate between them with equal fairness and authority. The various

processes are kept in concert by their common dependence on one system of machinery, to which, in spite of themselves, all quarrels and differences must ultimately be referred. The steam-engine is the most impartial of arbitrators: it is impassive to bribes, it is insensible of flattery, and it is the common assistant and friend of all.

The factory system concentrates a large amount of capital, and employs it in one special production: viewed thus in its abstract, we may freely confess that it is capable of effecting much good or much evil, according to the direction it receives. So far, however, as we have yet gone, we have found that the good is immediately and perceptibly connected with profit, while the evil is no less clearly and directly associated with loss. But we have to take a more special view of the Factories of Lancashire, and look at the form in which their capital is invested, it being distributed in a far larger proportion to the machinery than to the materials of production.

We have outlived the senseless cry that mechanical inventions deprive the labourers of employment and the poor of bread. The unanswerable fact, that employment in every branch of industry has increased by the introduction of machinery into it, is too notorious to be controverted: instead of employment being diminished wherever machinery is introduced, we know now that every new mill erected creates a fresh demand for labour. But this is an ultimate result,

and we may uphold it while we confess that every new invention does, at its first introduction, deprive a certain number of persons of their peculiar occupation, and produce some perturbation in the labour-market. There is no longer profitable employment for knitters of stockings, and the power-loom presses hard upon the hand-loom weaver. But when the factory system has once taken firm root, mechanical invention must every day exercise less and less of perturbating influence. The cost of new machinery, the expenses of extensive alteration, the spirit of routine engendered by long habits, must render the transition from old to new processes very slow and gradual. Take, for instance, the power-loom, the self-acting mule, and the jacquard-loom, and you will be perfectly astonished at the tardy pace with which they crept into general use. We are warranted from all experience to conclude that the depression of demand for labour produced by any new mechanical invention is limited and temporary, while the subsequent increase of employment is extensive and permanent.

I feel great pleasure in acknowledging that nearly all the views which I have set forth in the preceding pages were suggested to me by the operatives, and not by their employers. Adversity has been an efficient teacher: several of them who adhered pretty strongly to Chartist opinions declared that what they had seen in their present crisis had greatly altered their sentiments respecting machinery and capital. I have

already adverted to the block-printers of Padiham, who lamented that the landowners had resisted the establishment of cotton-mills in that district. I may mention, in addition, the case of an unemployed power-loom weaver at Pilkington: he said that he was out of employment because his master had been one of "the small-uns" and he was of opinion that none but large capitalists should be permitted to open a factory, because no others could have a reserve fund from which employment might be continued when a season of distress and difficulty came.

Much of the right thinking found among the Lancashire operatives must probably be attributed to the habits of order, cleanliness, and propriety impressed upon them by the nature of factory employments. I must confess that the arrangements for the maintenance of perfect order, and preventing one operation from interfering in any way with another, filled me with more surprise and admiration than the wonders of mechanical ingenuity or chemical skill displayed in a mill or print-works.

There is a place for everything, and everything in its place. Nobody is for a moment at a loss to know what he has to do: the organization of the community is complete, and the human agents work with all the exactness of machinery. There is no small display of moral power in thus impressing unity of action on a mass of operatives, not unfrequently exceeding a thousand in number: it is not inferior to the intellectual power which has rendered available all the dis-

coveries of science. These operatives are thus stringently ruled by their own consent: they feel that the government they are under works in all its parts for the promotion of their own interests; their obedience is complete, because it is "a reasonable service;" for if at any time the reason escaped their ken, resistance and disobedience would begin. So strange a combination of perfect despotism with perfect freedom never before existed, and to have produced such a state is one of the noblest triumphs of morality and intelligence. In a former letter I endeavoured to show you the indestructibility of the factory system from physical considerations, but I may now add that it has higher energies to ensure its vitality:—

> "Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus,
> MENS agitat molem et magni se corpore miscet."

The factory system must be based on sound principles, or it could not have grown, flourished, and extended: its foundations at least must be fixed on rectitude and on knowledge: as yet these elements have not received their full development, but they are capable of being evolved into multitudinous blessings:—

> "Igneus est ollis vigor, et cœlestis origo
> Seminibus, quantum non noxia corpora tardant."

I beg of you to forgive me for falling into my old habits of quotation, and to plead as an excuse for referring to Virgil—that he was once translated by Cotton.

LETTER VIII.

The Oaks, Turton, near Bolton, ——, 1842.

THE brief interval of repose which I am enjoying in this quiet and lovely spot gives me leisure to continue my investigations into the influence of the factory system on the working classes. It will perhaps be advisable in the present letter to keep existing distress out of sight as much as possible, and to regard this as a perturbating element, which, so far as it extends, is likely to prevent our discovering the natural tendency of the factory system when left to pursue its own uninterrupted course.

There is one circumstance, indeed, connected with the present suffering,—which, though noticed before, must not be forgotten here,—the great moral strength with which the pressure of misery has been endured. Such endurance must have been based on knowledge and intelligence, or it must have yielded to the rude shocks which it has had to sustain. I may, perhaps, be permitted to hope that the worth of a people, whose value, like that of gold tested in the fire, has been subjected to the most severe and searching ordeal, will for the future be much more justly appreciated by

their countrymen than it has hitherto been; and that the men of Lancashire may yet have reason to say, "It was well for us that we were afflicted for a season." For these, and some other reasons, it may be advisable on the present occasion to quit, for a time, the beaten and ordinary track of investigation, and apply ourselves to examine the intellectual rather than the physical condition of the Lancashire operatives. This is, perhaps, the less popular course,—but it may be pardoned to the extent of a single letter:—it is also apparently the least practical; yet we may remark that it is only by quitting the beaten path that we can hope for any new discoveries, or, what are chiefly to be sought in this case, neglected truths.

I am quite willing to confess that the mechanical processes which require a continuous and unvarying repetition of the same operation day after day and year after year have a tendency to degrade the workman into an automaton, whose greatest merit will be to make a certain number of movements in a given time. My friend Buret was justified in saying that "there is little opportunity for the exercise of intelligence in a man who spends twelve or fourteen hours every day of his life manufacturing the twenty-fourth part of a pin."

Were it not for the inexplicable folly which has confounded reading and writing with education, to which they bear about the same relation as a knif

and fork do to a good dinner, it would have been seen that every employment in which men engage is a part of their education,—that is, has a share in the formation of their intellectual and moral habits. Circumstances train men into character; a truth which the world recognised for about two thousand years, and only began to doubt when it was propounded as a novelty by Robert Owen. Ireland is not the only country where people estimate truth, not by *what* is said, but by *who* says it. We have seen Protestants in their zealous tilts against popery attack the foundations of Christianity, and we have witnessed attacks on national systems of education which went the whole length of saying that ignorance is a decided blessing, and that God had endowed men with talents for the express purpose of having them buried in napkins.

It is time to get rid of such nonsense as discussing the question of education or no-education. There does not exist a state of no-education. As Archbishop Sharp said, "Where God is not permitted to teach, the devil takes the office of instructor." Every human being is educated: his thoughts, words, and actions, though not wholly predestined, are influentially modified by the company he keeps, the examples he beholds, and the stringent circumstances of his position. Education begins when we are taught to cling with affection to the breast by which we are warmed and cherished: it ends only when we pass

into the more perfect state of existence for which this world is a place of exercise and preparation.

Thus viewed, the peasant has undoubtedly more favourable opportunities for education, taken in its proper sense, than the mechanic. It would be no parodox to assert that the uninstructed operative is worse educated than the uninstructed Indian in the wilds of North America. For my part, I should much rather be exposed to the savages of New Zealand than to a community composed of the worst specimens of humanity to be found in the wynds of Glasgow, the cellars of Liverpool, and the Angel-meadows of Manchester. The BOOK OF NATURE is open to the savage: it reveals and compels him to note the signs of the revolving seasons, the opening buds that herald the spring, the fading leaf that announces autumn: the melody of his own forests wakes and gratifies his musical taste, and summer spreads before his eyes landscapes of richer colouring than ever proceeded from the easel of a painter: his love of excitement is gratified by the labours of the chase; his desire of independence satisfied by being "monarch of a shed:" for him the sun "cometh abroad in his majesty," and the moon "walketh in her brightness:" though for him no school is opened and no teacher provided by public or private benevolence, he has had the benefit of those celestial instructors, which "have neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them; whose sound is gone out into all lands, and

their words unto the ends of the world!" Society, by enforcing rules of artificial existence, has wrested these instructors from the operative; it is bound both by duty and interest to find others in their stead. It will not do to neglect the obligation: dreadful would be the result if an element of the worst barbarism were permitted to grow up and develop itself in the midst of the highest civilization: it would soon absorb and assimilate the sources of that civilization, the gangrene would extend to the vitals, and the certain dissolution of society would be the inevitable result. Rome fell, not because its finances were exhausted or its armies routed, but because the lower ranks of its population were systematically corrupted, uneducated in all that was good, and very thoroughly instructed in all that was evil.

When speaking on this subject, I have been often answered that the mechanic is more certain of subsistence than the Indian: he is sure to obtain his daily bread. This is no compensation; the voice of Truth has declared "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." I would that more attention was paid to the import of this sublime declaration: it is *every* word that must form part of man's spiritual food, whether written in the inspired record or traced in characters of living flame on "the heavens which declare the glory of God, and the firmament which showeth His handiwork." Man has a spiritual as

well as a physical existence: he has wants for the mind not less urgent than those for the body, and moreover they are far more dangerous if neglected.

Much, I cheerfully grant, has been done to promote the intellectual culture of the operatives; taken as a body, the mill-population of Lancashire is at least equal in intelligence to any other class of the labouring community, and superior to most. Had they not been so, they could not have so steadily resisted the incendiary efforts which have been made to set them in hostile array against their employers, and the pernicious sophistry used to represent capital as the enemy of labour. They have shown themselves able to ascend by investigation to the real causes of the distress which they endure; and I could assign no stronger proof of their having availed themselves of all the opportunities in their power "to get wisdom, and therewith to get understanding."

We have too long known it to be the tendency of mankind to blame individuals for the evils of circumstances. No error is more unjust, and none also is more pernicious: attention is withdrawn from the real nature of the misery, and the remedies which are then ignorantly devised serve only to aggravate the disease. A stupid or negligent nurse allows a child to trip and stumble; after which the baby is taught to beat the floor or the furniture, which does not remove the cause of the stumbling, and hurts the knuckles into the bargain. There are political nurses

who would treat the operatives as children, and ascribe the diminution of wages and employment to agents which are as impassive in the affair as either floor or furniture. The factory operatives of Lancashire have got beyond this stage of childhood, and the nurse that tries to turn them aside from the cause to the consequence of their fall is on the high road to obtain a contemptuous dismissal.

Still there is much of evil to be remedied in the intellectual condition of the working classes. Just take a glance at the circumstances by which, in countless instances, the character of the operative must be as irresistibly predetermined as if it had been written on the table of destiny. He goes at daybreak from a lodging which can scarcely be called a home, to spend twelve or fourteen hours in an employment which admits of little variety or change. Will the spirit thus confined all day not seek a vent and issue when the task is done? Will the love of excitement—the passion which is so intertwined in the human mind that it seems the very principle of existence—which the mechanical employment of the day has kept down with iron pressure, not seek the gratification of its energies? The soul has the same need of emotions that the body has of food; and, as in the one case so in the other, where proper aliment is not provided, our appetite will lead us to prey on garbage.

A remedy, indeed, has been proposed which assuredly has no parallel in the annals of quackery. It is

the "Ten-hours Bill." An Irishman once said that the only purpose for which the Martello Towers could have been erected was to puzzle posterity: the proposers of the "Ten-hours Bill" have done more,—in addition to puzzling posterity, which they are sure to do, they have sorely bewildered the existing generation. At a time when the operatives are suffering from want of employment in consequence of fiscal restrictions on commerce, these pretended benefactors of the operative insist on the continuance of the restrictions, and then propose to diminish the time of his labour; thus increasing the price of his food and decreasing his means of purchasing it. Does not all this irresistibly remind one of the Spanish caricature, in which a monk is represented picking the pockets of a mendicant, exclaiming, at the same time, "My poor man, I will pray God to have compassion upon your misery"?

I am thoroughly convinced of the necessity of giving to the operative time and leisure for rest and relaxation. No one feels more strongly than I do the great but neglected truth, that moral education, in spite of all the labours of direct instructors, is really acquired in hours of recreation. Sports and amusements are, and must be, means by which the mind is insensibly trained; the lectures of the school-room will be utterly ineffective when they are counteracted by the practical lessons of the playground. "Men are but children of a larger growth:" they

will have their pleasures, and, unless care be taken, the sermons of the church or chapel will be neutralized by the associations of the tavern and the race-ground. There must be safety-valves for mind; that is, there must be means for its pleasurable, profitable, and healthful exertion. These means it is in our power to render safe and innocent: these means in too many instances have been rendered dangerous and guilty.

Hitherto nearly all our legislation on the subject of the amusements of the poor has been penal and restrictive; while a sour, jealous, and selfish spirit has led to a series of encroachments on their comforts and enjoyments which has far outstripped the intentions of the legislature. The commons on which the labourers indulged in healthful sports are enclosed; policemen guard the streets and keep the highways clear; high walls enclose demesnes, and even the iron palisades that surround ornamental grounds are jealously planked over to prevent the humble operative from enjoying the verdure of the foliage or the fragrance of the flowers. It is quite enough to say that a "Foot-path Protection Society" exists in Manchester: the necessity for such an institution at once establishes not merely the want of sympathy for the pleasures of the poor, but something like a determination to deprive them of their pleasures by robbery and usurpation.

The plain fact is, that in too many instances the only resource which the mechanic has for the excitement and emotions necessary to his existence is the public-house. Excluded, partly by law, but chiefly by the spirit of class, from nobler pleasures, he is driven, by a force not less stringent than any natural power in the universe, to seek the joys of gin and brandy, to find exercise for his mental energies in the impure dreams of intoxication and the miserable distractions of debauchery.

Nor is this all: perverted ingenuity has been exercised to render the intoxication as brutal and the debauchery as bestial as human laws can make it. Precautions have been taken to prevent any degradation of the majesty of vice, by permitting innocent amusements to have any share in giving the operatives the necessary excitement. It is probable, nay, it is nearly certain, that music or singing would afford a share of the desired excitement, and thus lead to a diminution of the quantity of alcohol swallowed to produce emotion; but music, singing, and dancing are prohibited in the majority of public-houses, under the pretence that they might prove too attractive. As vice has been rendered inevitable, it has pleased those who have been intrusted with its administration to take care that we should have all its grossness into the bargain. I do not exaggerate,—I heard with my own ears a music licence magisterially refused, on the

ground that it was advisable to render vice repulsive. Such wisdom will assuredly add to the perplexities of posterity.

Intoxication is not the only, indeed it is scarcely the worst, depravation of intellect in the public-house. In the absence of music and singing conversation forms part of the excitement which the operative seeks. Now, what are the subjects likely to be discussed amid the reekings of gin and the smoke of tobacco? The language is just suited to the *Pandæmonium* in which it is uttered: it corresponds with the stimulants by which it is dictated. Let not, however, the proud disdain the poor for seeking such indulgence: let them not blame the individuals for yielding to the impression of circumstances from without and from within; but let them seriously consider whether it is not in the power of society to provide innocent recreations, which they may be induced to accept as a substitute for guilty pleasures. On the other hand, let not the poor be misled to believe that a fearless exposure of their intellectual and moral evils arises from any contempt for their order, any desire to malign their character, or any wish to abridge their freedom. While I can wield a pen I will be the advocate of the industrious classes, but I never will be their flatterer.

The operatives of Manchester have shown their taste and capability for higher enjoyments than smoking and drinking. I have gone into some of the con-

cert-rooms attached to favoured public-houses which they frequent, and I have never been in a more orderly and better-behaved company. The music was well selected, the songs perfectly unobjectionable; the conversation, in the intervals between the pieces, not only decorous, but to some degree refined, and the quantity of liquor consumed by each individual very trifling. But I have also been in houses where music was prohibited, and the scenes which I witnessed will not bear description.

The Lyceums recently established have afforded still more striking proofs of the moral and intellectual advancement of the operatives of Manchester. These institutions unite the advantages of a Temperance news-room to those of a Mechanics' Institute. The subscription to them is about twopence per week, and for this sum the operative has the advantage of a Library, a News-room, and Lectures; occasionally the members assemble at a tea-party for general conversation, and the evening concludes with a ball, conducted with etiquette as rigid as Almack's. I found that in many instances the newspaper was the chief attraction of the public-house, especially on Sunday, and that operatives ceased to frequent the tavern when they could obtain intelligence elsewhere. The operatives of Lancashire are generally keen politicians, and I rejoice at it, because I think it a most healthy sign of society for every individual to feel and display an interest in the general prosperity of the community.

I do not undervalue instruction in reading and writing; on the contrary, I heartily wish that it was more general and more effective; but I am convinced that such instruction, given at the best schools that ever existed, is not sufficient to meet the intellectual wants of the population. There must be means of keeping up, as well as acquiring, knowledge, or else what is gained in school will assuredly be lost when the school-days are over. I am very intimate with a gentleman who obtained high mathematical honours at Cambridge, and who would now be sorely puzzled to solve a quadratic equation; and I have known many of the labouring classes who, in youth, could read very well, but from want of practice have now all but forgotten their alphabet. To read imperfectly is practically little better than not being able to read at all; when a book is a task instead of an indulgence, it will obviously not be sought as a means of relaxation.

In these days to procure a book or a newspaper is easy enough; but it is not so easy for the operative to find a place in which he can sit down to read either. It is hopeless to try the experiment in the crowded lodging-room or the cellar, and in towns it is not possible to study in the open air. Unfortunately, also, there are such things as bad books and bad newspapers, and the operative may be rendered all the worse by contact with either. I must add

that tract societies seem to be founded in utter ignorance of the mind of the labouring classes. They feel it an indignity that any other class should presume to think for them, and dictate what they should or should not read. Set a miscellaneous library before them, and let them choose for themselves; but beware of encouraging a notion, already too prevalent, that soup-tickets and religious tracts are fit only for the poor.

From all my observations I am led to conclude that the intelligence diffused among the operatives of Manchester comes very close to the average of that in the classes above them, and, where it is less elegant, is of more practical value for the purposes of life. But it will not do to rest satisfied with simple knowledge,—there is a higher species of knowledge by which intellectual acquisitions must be guided and directed, or they will become perilous to the possessors and to the community. We must do more, because we have done so much. This, indeed, is an argument which it is fashionable to ridicule; people think that, having done much, they should henceforth do nothing; just as if the coachman, after having harnessed the horses, should take it into his head that there was no necessity for seizing the reins and mounting the box. Every exertion made to raise the intellectual condition of a people necessitates a further exertion to guide and direct the intelligence which has been

communicated; the labour of philanthropy has no end,—the task of statesmanship can never be safely suspended.

I have been more forcibly impressed by the necessity of providing intellectual recreations for the operative since I have observed that there is a tendency in the use of machinery to materialize the thoughts and exclude all considerations of spiritual existence. There is no proportion between what has been done for the education of the understanding and the head, and what has been done for the education of the feelings and the heart. Somehow or other, there is a growing and perceptible deficiency in the tone of the few allusions made by an operative to his inner man. I believe this to arise entirely from the want of opportunity for exercising his imaginative faculties by the recreations which may call them into play. I am persuaded that a total withholding of amusements deadens the powers by which religion is appreciated, leading an excitable temperament into the wildness of fanaticism, and leaving those of colder constitutions in a torpid scepticism. Certainly both results are to be found in the manufacturing districts; and though many perhaps will believe that I have not traced these evils to their right cause, I hope that the recognised magnitude of the evils may lead to a careful investigation.

I cannot conclude this letter, already too long, without testifying that most of the schools for the

operatives in the manufacturing districts are admirably conducted, and that the intellectual deficiencies of which I complain have relation only to the adult classes of the population.

The factory system had, and perhaps I may say has, a tendency within itself to correct many of the evils to which I have directed your Lordship's attention. Before the progress of manufacturing industry met the severe interruption from which it now suffers, it was daily becoming what might perhaps be termed *Sporadic;* new mills, instead of being crowded together in streets, were chiefly erected in villages or in suburbs, affording employers opportunities of coming frequently into personal communication with their workpeople, and exercising a healthy control over their domestic habits and private morals. They could join in instituting circulating libraries, societies for mutual instruction, and for enjoying little concerts of vocal and instrumental music. Such conduct has been exhibited in the establishments of the Greggs, the Ashworths, the Ashtons, the Whiteheads, and many others. Nor can there be a reasonable doubt that, if manufacturing industry had continued prosperous, this system would have been greatly strengthened and extended. A healthy spirit of emulation has long existed among the proprietors of rural mills and print-works: they were not less proud of the comforts and respectable appearance of their operatives than a nobleman is of his palace or demesne. The place in which I am is

a proof of the great social benefit which arises from the management I have described: in everything that tends to promote intellectual acquisition the operatives in a well-managed country mill are fully on an equality with their brethren in Manchester; in the means for preserving health, cleanliness, and morality, they are decidedly superior.

LETTER IX.

The Oaks, Turton, near Bolton, ——, 1842.

A DAY of action has succeeded to a day of contemplation. My excellent host has induced me to visit some of those who may be called the philosophers of the operatives, for it is time that we should cease to limit the title of thinkers and philosophers. Men thought before books were written, and in the course of my present tour I have heard the most important lessons in moral science and political economy from the lips of persons who have never been inside the doors of what may be called a study. Nature, scripture, society, and life have been their teachers: there are many, very many, among them who have sought truth with an earnest mind, and all such must be regarded as belonging to the class of intellectual men. To this cause must be attributed, in no small degree, the depth of the sympathy which the present sufferings of the men of Lancashire excite in the breast of a comparative stranger.—MIND IS PERISHING.—Another generation may succeed to the place of that which famine and misery are hurrying out of exist-

ence; but who shall secure to it the heritage of intelligence? Nay, who shall answer that the example before them of the unprofitableness of industry and intelligence to their possessors may not lead them to undervalue these qualities, and to sink to the level of the degraded serfs of Poland? Are there not symptoms abroad of such a consummation? Is not mendicancy fearfully on the increase? I can remember a time when a beggar was a rare object in a village of South Lancashire, but that time exists no longer: they have increased and they are increasing, as I saw with pain during my drive this morning.

Our first visit was to a village patriarch, over ninety years of age, in whose house were to be seen individuals of five generations. He resides with his grandchildren, who are grown men and women. But for my companion I should have experienced some difficulty in finding my way, arising from a curious Lancashire custom with which I was previously unacquainted. It appears that the number of surnames among the primitive rural race is limited, and that individuals are distinguished by the Christian names of their fathers and even their grandfathers. The person whom I wished to see, at whose house the old man lodged, was known as "Jack o' Ned's o' Bob's;" that is to say, John, the son of Edward, the son of Robert. To find him out therefore required a far more intimate acquaintance with Lancashire genealogies than I can ever hope to obtain. During this

brief excursion I had reason to admire a fresh instance of the independent civility of the sturdy Lancastrians: we had to pass through a gate—a passenger on the road ran and opened it; after which he resumed his road without the ordinary courtesy of salutation, without waiting or apparently wishing for thanks.

We soon found the patriarch of whom we were in search. Time had touched him with lenient hand: his limbs indeed were feeble, his eyes dim, and his ears dull of hearing: it required an effort for memory to bring up the recollections, and when they came many of the images were too faint to be held firmly together by the chain of association. The old man, without actually wandering in his conversation, passed from one subject to another, scarcely conscious of having made a transition. Good feeling and good principle, however, still survived; he spoke of the existing distress with marked sympathy; he said that he had remembered many seasons of depression in Lancashire, but that the present was far the worst, both in extent, duration, and intensity. He had been a weaver, and remembered the condition of the trade before the introduction of machinery. He stated, as a curious circumstance, that some species of woollen goods were manufactured in the neighbourhood of Bolton and Manchester which were called *cottons* (probably a corruption of coatings) before the cotton-wool was introduced into the country. In his youth-

ful days the difficulty of procuring a sufficient supply of yarn was a great impediment to the industry of the weavers, especially after the efficiency of their labours had been increased by the invention of the fly-shuttle and the drop-box. At that time large quantities of linen-yarn were imported from Holland and Ireland, but the supply was insufficient to meet the demand. Weavers and their apprentices went from house to house among the cottagers, to purchase the yarn which had been slowly and laboriously spun by the one-thread wheel. The spinners in those days were the masters of the weavers, and they very often took a most unfair advantage of their position. If two or three buyers appeared together in a rural district, the intelligence spread with telegraphic rapidity from house to house, and the price of yarns immediately rose one-third or even one-half. These were, according to his account, really the days of infant slavery; "The creatures were set to work," he said, "as soon as they could crawl," and their parents were the hardest of taskmasters. I may remark that on a previous occasion I received a similar account from an old man in the vale of Todmorden, who declared that he would not accept an offer to live his whole life over again, if it were to be accompanied with the condition of passing through the same servitude and misery which he had endured in infancy. Both these old men expressed great indignation at the clamour which had been raised for infant protection: my

Todmorden friend quite lost his temper whenever any reference was made to the subject, contrasting in very strong terms the severities he had endured, and the heavy labours he had to perform, both in his father's house and afterwards as an apprentice, with the light toil and positive comfort of the factory children. He also bitterly regretted that he had never been taught to read or write, and described to me in homely but affecting language the comfort which he derived from hearing the Scriptures read by one of his grandchildren. He had pondered on what he read, and I was not a little struck by the depth of his reflections and the strength of his observations. I remember that he was at the time of my visit exceedingly annoyed by some minister of religion—I think a Methodist preacher—who had spoken or preached in defence of the corn-laws, somewhere in his neighbourhood. "The Lord Jesus," he said, "worked a miracle to feed a starving multitude, and yet there are those who call themselves his followers who take the bread out of our mouths."

To return to the Turton patriarch: we heard from him a very graphic account of the effects produced on the minds of the operatives by the brilliant mechanical inventions of the last half-century. At the introduction of every new process for abridging labour they were convinced that they were ruined, but somehow or other it turned out in the end that they were better off than ever. On this account he

had been opposed to machine-breaking in the days of King Ludd, and had been much censured by persons in the same trade for opposing their projects. I spoke of the agricultural improvement of the country, and found that I had touched a chord on which the old man was quite eloquent. He inherited a small freehold, from which, under the former circumstances of the country, he believed that he would have been scarcely able by the hardest toil to extract the means of a bare subsistence: its value had now been so much increased that the profit rent furnished a competent provision for his declining days. He feared however that the continued distress might involve him in difficulties: if the poverty of the operatives or their removal to other districts closed the markets for the sale of farming produce, particularly milk, cheese, and butter, it was obvious that the tenant would be unable to pay the rent, and would probably throw the farm on his hands. He stood not alone in this dread of the ruin of the operatives extending to the agriculturists: every farmer with whom I conversed in South Lancashire shared the same fears, and many cursed themselves very heartily for having been such blockheads as to vote for supporters of the corn-laws at the last election.

I was much interested by an anecdote which the patriarch related respecting his family. His father had been in the employment of the Cheethams, and had at an advanced age married a young wife. She was a

remarkably pretty woman, and partly from this reason, and partly out of gratitude for the attention she paid to some of the children whom she nursed, the Cheethams employed a clever artist to paint the portraits of her and her husband. Three-quarters of a century rolled on; the rich heritage of the Cheethams passed through female branches into other families, and the subject of the paintings was forgotten by all but the old man, who never lost sight of the portraits of his parents. At length a report reached his ears that the furniture of the house in which they were contained was likely to be sold. He forthwith "saddled tit," disregarding the remonstrances of his children and grandchildren, who each offered to undertake the commission, dreading that at his time of life a ride to Manchester might be perilous, or at least inconvenient, especially as he had not visited the town for nearly half a century. But nothing could dissuade the old man from what he considered a filial duty: he presented himself at the house containing the beloved portraits, and stated his business to the astonished servants. Mrs. Clowes, the lady who possessed this treasure, summoned him to her presence and questioned him as to his identity: this, by the aid of an old steward, he was enabled to establish satisfactorily: she then presented him with the portraits, ordered him some refreshment, and complimented him highly on such extraordinary respect for the memory of his parents. It was delightful to

listen to the affectionate gratitude with which the old man dwelt on every word, tone, and gesture of this benevolent lady: his children and grandchildren, who must have heard the story a thousand times, invoked blessings on her head, as if the occurrence had been of yesterday; and for my part, I can wish her no richer reward than an opportunity of witnessing the gratification which a single act of kindness has conferred on five generations.

One of the old man's grandsons was a machine-maker; he had gone to America in search of employment, and had worked for some time in Philadelphia. But the Lancastrians are scarcely less subject than the Swiss to the disease of *Nostalgia*, or, as we may render it, the "home-sickness." He returned to England and worked for a time in London: business becoming slack in the metropolis, he came once more down to Lancashire, but, being unable to obtain work, had grown weary of remaining a burthen to his family. The accounts which he gave of the Americans seemed to have produced a very unfavourable impression on his relatives, for, on his intimating an intention to revisit the United States, his aunt said, "I am sure, if I were in your case, I would do anything,—I would even become a gentleman's servant, rather than go back to such a place."

I saw some specimens of this young man's work: they exhibited no ordinary neatness of execution, and a very considerable share of the inventive faculty.

He was not only willing to work, but he had just returned from a circuit of several hundred miles in search of employment. My conversation with him convinced me of the justice of some reflections which I had penned when many similar cases were brought before my notice during a former tour in Lancashire; and as they were published only in a local periodical of limited circulation, I know that your Lordship will excuse me for giving them a place here.

The operative's skill has not been diminished, his industry is unabated, but nevertheless he "stands in the market-place all the day idle." Various as have been the causes assigned for the existence of this unquestioned depression of trade and diminution of employment, no one has ventured to affix the smallest particle of blame to the operatives themselves. It is confessed that they are as able and as willing to work as ever they were, but there is no demand for their labour and no call upon their skill.

Now, we must never forget that, while this state of things continues, there is necessarily a continuous destruction of the national capital, which is injurious to the entire community. 'Labour is the operative's capital, but it is destroyed when it is not used; every hour of idleness subtracts the value of an hour of industry from the stock of the nation's wealth, and though the loss immediately and directly falls only upon the labourer, yet by no very remote consequences it produces a sensible effect on the entire community.

There are people who seem to expect that the simple result will be a decrease in the rate of wages, and a diminution in the comforts of the operatives only. This pernicious error arises from what is a very common, and at the same time a very absurd notion, that labour is dearer in England than elsewhere. Measuring labour by quantity and quality instead of by time, and measuring the value of wages by the amount of necessaries and comforts which they will purchase, we unhesitatingly assert that labour is at this moment, and has been for at least the last ten years, cheaper in England than in any other country on the face of the earth. If it had not been so we should have been bankrupts long ago. The proof is easy: the number of persons living without work on rent, pensions, annuities, government pay, interest of money, &c., bears a much greater proportion to the whole amount of population in England than in any other country: it is very clear that those who do not work must be supported by those who do,—but for the bees the drones would starve; and, therefore, the amount taken for the support of the idle from the profits of the industrious being here greatest, it is self-evident that the remainder left to remunerate industry must in this country be least. We may further appeal to the experience of travellers: take the instance of any family that have made a tour in their own carriage through Germany and Italy, and met a break-down: on inquiry

you will find that the cost of repairs was greater than it would have been in Long Acre, and that the work was worse done.

It may be said that I am here assuming training and skill as elements of labour;—assuredly I am. Is any kind of knowledge acquired without exertion? or is skill attainable without labour? The very essence of the question we are discussing is involved in the aphorism—that what would be adequate as remuneration and sustenance for unskilled labour would be not merely justly but physically very inadequate both for the reward and the support of skilled labour.

I am not prepared to enter into physiological questions, but we need no extraordinary science to discover that a man's organization will be affected and modified by the circumstances of his support, by what may be termed his "diet, washing, lodging, and clothing." "Man," says Boerhaave, "is a plant with the roots growing inside;" and, like the plant, his fruits will to a great extent be predestined and predetermined by the nature of the sustenance supplied to those roots. Everything, then, which deteriorates the physical condition of the operative, lessens in the same proportion the value of his physical existence: he becomes worth less not only to himself but to society. It is not political economy, but the very worst species of political quackery, which attempts

to fix the standard of food at the lowest possible rate by which nature can be supported. Such policy would be a realization of the old proverb, "losing the ship for the sake of a pennyworth of tar," with a vengeance. Political economy teaches not only that the poor man must live, but that he must live "in working order," otherwise he cannot be a contributor to the wealth of the country, but must continue to be a burthen upon its resources during the whole of his miserable existence. Wherever, then, there is distress among the working classes, there must be not merely a waste, but a destruction, of the national stock of capital, and the loss spreads to every individual in the community.

To the physical deterioration of the operative, and its perilous results, my attention was directed by my companion on our return. He informed me of a fact which was subsequently confirmed to me by some gentlemen connected with the Bolton and Chorlton Unions, namely, that, as pauperism extends, the amount of relief to each individual pauper is necessarily diminished. This helped to explain also the necessity for protecting the relieving officer at Colne with a military guard. Now, every operative whose powers of production are broken down by this low diet is so much withdrawn from the working capital of the nation. Industry, skill, and intelligence are the capital of the English nation: they have been worked in Lancashire so as to increase the value of the county

6300 per cent. in the course of a century and a half: is it not, then, something like a national madness for men to allow this capital, more precious than the mines of Peru or Golconda, to be wasted and frittered away; —to adopt a course of policy which at the same time imposes a necessity for increased expenditure, and destroys the means of payment? Such conduct in an individual would be denounced as a perverse determination to arrive speedily at bankruptcy, and would have a very awkward effect when revealed at a meeting of creditors. Should England ever become bankrupt, the world can find plenty of excuses in her imprudence and extravagance for refusing her certificate.

Our conversation then turned on America, and my companion mentioned two circumstances which I have since investigated and found to be correct. Such a want of the materials of clothing is felt in the country along the Ohio and the Mississippi, that the inhabitants are obliged to have recourse to the most heterogeneous materials in order to make out a decent dress. This deficiency does not arise from any want of the means of purchasing our manufactures, but simply from the laws which prohibit our merchants from receiving the only payment which they have to offer. Last year they sent down so large a stock of pork, beef, and other provisions to New Orleans, that room could not be found for them in the stores. The barrels were piled on the quays;

the fierce sun of Louisiana soon produced fermentation and corruption; the putrescent mass tainted the air and greatly increased the mortality of the yellow fever which annually visits that city; and thus, what would have been the means of life to Lancashire became the source of death to New Orleans. Can we sufficiently admire a system of legislation whose most signal results are pestilence on one side of the Atlantic and famine on the other;—nakedness in America and starvation in England?*

Our next visit was to a village adjacent to one of the numerous bridges which span the Irwell. If rivers had feeling, the Irwell would have reason to complain, for it is the most hard-worked and overtasked stream in the universe. It is, however, enjoying an interval of repose, and its idleness is increasing with the stoppage of the mills on its banks. I saw many a wheel idle and many a chimney smokeless; as a consequence, I found the village for the most part tenanted by a poverty-stricken population. Having entered into conversation with some of

* Just as this sheet was passing through the press, I see from the 'Morning Chronicle' that Mr. Henry Ashworth has stated these circumstances to a public meeting; and that the advocates of prohibition, in another place, declare that they would consent to alter the Corn Laws if they could be convinced of their pernicious tendency. Well might Mr. Cobden ask, "How are they to be convinced?"—It was wisely said of yore, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

the unemployed operatives, I found that here, as elsewhere, they were determined Chartists. Some had gone so far as to join the physical-force party, and they declared themselves ready to take the counsels of despair. Yet this village was one of those which might well recall the visions of the happy valley of Rasselas: the surrounding country was cultivated like a park; industry had changed the very aspect of Nature, and clothed with the richest verdure a soil which, but for cultivation, would have been consigned to sterility. The contrast between the smiling fields and their sorrowing inhabitants was perfectly startling. It was impossible not to ask why, in the midst of these fertile fields, do we discover wretched peasants, pinched with want—expiring from famine, and blighted, intellectually and morally not less than physically, with despair? Why does "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn" awake so many hapless beings to repetition of suffering;—why is the note of "the swallow twittering from the straw-built shed," like the croak of the raven, a warning to hear the renewal of calamity? Has "bright improvement" come "upon the car of time," merely that we should see realized the fearful picture which the prophet has drawn of the evils wrought in Judea by Babylonian barbarity?

Let no one suppose that such questions suggest themselves only to a single mind. They are present to the minds of thousands, whose perplexity in dis-

covering a satisfactory answer may lead to their adopting solutions rife with fearful consequences. There is yet time to avert the calamities which the state of things before me is calculated to produce. But if the remedial measures be too long delayed,—if the opportunity—the golden opportunity—offered by the rejection of the American Tariff be neglected, the war between the "Have-nots" and the "Haves" must inevitably break out, and Coleridge's fearful eclogue of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter' will become applicable to districts far more important and extensive than La Vendée. This alarm is suggested by no loud threat or angry declaration; I have heard little of such vapouring in Lancashire; it arises from hearing stern declamations made with a concentrated energy and bitter resoluteness which found vent in few and brief sentences: these were pregnant with meaning, and meant far more than they said. I endeavoured to remonstrate with one of these men, and to show him the perils of the course which he wished to see adopted: he cut me very short, and coolly informed me that "the time for argument was gone past."

In this village I met with one of the most remarkable men I have ever seen, a perfect specimen of the rural philosopher: he never studied logic in his life, but I never saw any one who approached him in quickness of detecting a fallacy or exposing a sophism. His art of reasoning consisted in his powers of graphic and comic illustration. For instance, some conversa-

tion arose respecting war; he said, in a strong Lancashire dialect which I am quite unable to imitate, "My father was killed at Waterloo;—there was a day appointed for thanksgiving in church;—parson comes to me and says,—Will you not come to church and thank God for the great victory which he has bestowed upon your country? And, says I,—What should I thank God for? Is it for killing my father?"—He told us several anecdotes of his anti-corn-law debates, for he is a zealous agitator in the cause of repeal. On one occasion he met with a Methodist preacher who averred that the present suffering in the manufacturing districts was a visitation sent from God to punish the sins of the working classes, and proposed that they should hold a day of solemn fast and humiliation. The operative replied that there would be no objection to it, provided it were such a fast as that described by the prophet Isaiah, quoting the passage: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, *to undo the heavy burthens*, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye undo every yoke? Is it not *to deal thy bread to the hungry*, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that *thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*" "Who are they," continued this fine specimen of Nature's orators, "that hide themselves from their own flesh? Is it the poor? No! Those who have scarcely enough for themselves will share

their bite and their sup with a brother in distress. If a man is in distress and comes here, which will he soonest go to, the door of a cottage or to one of the big houses? You know well where he would obtain the best reception. Mistress would run upstairs, that her delicate sense might not be offended by the nasty beggar, and in her bed-room 'hide herself from her own flesh;'—if master did not set the dogs at him, he would whistle them to his heels, and in the cover 'hide himself from his own flesh.'—The great people in London who know that we are starving for want of work and food, and that means for giving us both are in the country, which they withhold lest they might lose a farthing in the pound of their rents, they are the persons who 'hide themselves from their own flesh;' but it is odds if their own flesh will not find them out some day or other, with a vengeance. No, said I to the Methodist, if Providence wanted to punish the sinful in the land, Providence would have made a great mistake in coming to the working classes. I tell thee, man, that if I believed what thou sayest I would turn Atheist: for if I thought that the Lord was the cause of all the misery I see around me, I would quit his service, and say he was not the Lord I took him for."

I do not attempt to report any more of the conversation of this remarkable man, but there was one sentiment to which he gave utterance, in reference to the Poor Laws, not merely as his own opinion, but as

that of the class to which he belonged, worthy of being recorded, because during my tour I have met it a thousand times in a thousand shapes. It was this, that the distressed operative's condition is greatly aggravated by his believing that he has a right to a better condition, inasmuch as he has taken a part in raising society to the condition which establishes a higher average of comfort than that to which he can attain. It is not to be supposed that the suffering operatives express themselves in these precise words, but a very slight analysis of their complaints will exhibit this sentiment imperfectly conceived, but still very influential in their thoughts.

In a former letter I stated what I now repeat, that in my opinion the actual destitution of the agricultural labourer is greater than that of the manufacturing operative, but I am still more fully persuaded that the sufferings of the latter are infinitely the greater.

Little more need be said to show that destitution is a relative term; but there is one remark on the subject which must not be omitted. It is sometimes said by careless persons, "The claims of the poor are much larger and more extravagant than they used to be; they ought to be satisfied with the same amount of relief which was sufficient for their class in the reign of Elizabeth!" Would the persons who use this language be satisfied with the same amount of comforts and luxuries which was sufficient for *their*

class in the reign of Elizabeth? Again, I have heard it said that the operatives of Lancashire cannot be distressed so long as their rate of wages is higher than that of agricultural labourers. Why not go farther, and require that they should be content with a handful of rice like the Hindoos, or eat grubs and worms like the savages of Australia? The error of such persons must not be ascribed entirely to obliquity of intellect or hardness of heart: it results from the very common mistake of confounding the positive with the relative. And this mistake is made as frequently by Fustian-jacket as by Broad-cloth: the rich require to be taught that whatever raises the standard of comfort in the class below will raise the standard of enjoyment in the class above; and the poor have to learn that a depreciation of the latter will at once lower the former.

Destitution being relative, misery, which is the moral perception of destitution, must be relative likewise; but it is so in a double sense, since it has to be measured not merely by the amount of existing wants, but by the acuteness with which these wants are felt. It would be very amusing to make a collection of the physiological facts of which many who pass for wise men are ignorant: one of them is, "that the poor have hearts as well as stomachs." The philanthropy which would measure its exertions purely by physical wants deserves to be stigmatised as the worst form of inhumanity. True repentance was

described by the prophet to be "the rending of the hearts and not of the garments:" with the same propriety true benevolence might be termed an opening of the heart-strings as well as the purse-strings. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Take, as an example, the remarkable man whose conversation I have been recording, and he is not an isolated wonder, but rather a representative of his class, differing from his fellows chiefly in the faculty of being able to think aloud;—would any man say that to him the moral degradation of pauperism, to which indeed he is not as yet exposed, would not be a greater source of misery than the severest sufferings of physical destitution? I find on my notes a sentence which I believe to be his, and a reply to some remark I made on his extraordinary powers and great versatility in conversation: "Every improved faculty of the mind is new strength of muscle to help us forward when times are prosperous, but in such seasons as this each improved faculty is a *new raw* on which the whip descends more painfully and bitterly."

We remained in conversation until a very late hour, and I parted with some regret from a man who had worked out for himself, and from his own observation, those principles of economic science which seem to be unknown to many who have had the advantage of a university education.

LETTER X.

The Oaks, Turton, near Bolton,——, 1842.

As I had to return to Manchester this day, I devoted the morning to a further examination of the social economy of a country mill, and I am confirmed in my conviction that in no place does labour exist under such favourable conditions. The interest of the proprietor in the health, morals, and prosperity of those he employs is obvious and immediate; most are connected with him in the double relation of workmen and of tenants, two divisions of his capital are invested in each family, and any injustice committed in the mill, would soon show its effects on the rent of the cottages. These circumstances also compel many country manufacturers to go on working their mills at a disadvantage in seasons of commercial distress; because, if they stopped, they would have to endure a double loss:—there would be no return from the capital invested in their factory and machinery;—the value of their cottage property would be deteriorated and ultimately destroyed. As a necessary consequence, there is a more patriarchal relation between master

and man in the country than can possibly exist in large towns. I repeat what I have already stated, that the geographical limits of non-intercourse established in Manchester are the greatest of the special evils connected with that town.

The isolation of classes in England has gone far to divide us into nations as distinct as the Normans and the Saxons: in our wisdom we have improved on the proverb, "One half of the world does not know how the other half lives," changing it into "One half of the world *does not care* how the other half lives." Ardwick knows less about Ancoats than it does about China, and feels more interested in the condition of New Zealand than of Little Ireland. Now I hold it to be an undeniable truth that a reduction of sympathy is not less severely felt, and is in itself not less injurious to the operative, than a reduction of wages. Away with that material philosophy which looks upon man as a mere machine, compounded of thews and sinews! He has affections, sympathies, and aspirations, which his superiors have no more right to crush than they have to drive their chariot-wheels over his body, or trample his limbs beneath the hoofs of their horses. Every outward sign of contempt or suspicion which they display is an injury and a wrong: it degrades man in his moral being, and such is the mysterious sympathy between mind and matter that it even deteriorates his physical condition.

I love the men of Manchester, but I will not flatter

them; and I tell them that they have done much to alienate from them the affections of the working classes. I would say to them, You have public places of recreation, Zoological and Botanical Gardens, but have you rendered them accessible to the operative? Have you not, on the contrary, availed yourself of the most flimsy excuses to shut every door of rational recreation against him? Does the working-man believe your excuses? Ask him, and he will laugh in your face. He will point to the boarded palings which hide your gardens, to the high walls which conceal your parks, to the precautions taken in all your places of recreation that Fustian-jacket should not come between the wind and your nobility; with a curse on his lips and bitterness in his heart, he will turn away, regarding the excuse for shutting him out as an addition to insult and an aggravation of injury.

Nowhere can a more perfect contrast to this isolation be found than in Turton, Egerton, Hyde, and most indeed of the country mills which I have visited: there the employer knows the employed and is known by them; an affectionate sense of mutual dependence and mutual interest is created equally advantageous to both parties; the factory displays to a great extent the relations of a family, and the operatives regard themselves as members of one common household. Some inquiries which I made as to the means employed for securing a regular supply of water for the

wheels of the extensive mills and print-works around procured me a piece of information singularly illustrating the connection between manufactures and agriculture in this district. On the first establishment of mills here, the moors and hills were covered with a spongy moss, which absorbed the rain and retained it for a considerable time: but as cultivation advanced, and the moors were changed into sheep-walks, pasturage, and dairy-farms, the mosses were forced to give way to the grasses; the ground became harder and smoother; the rain flowed off nearly as fast as it fell, so that the streams alternately exhibited swollen floods or almost empty beds. To remedy this evil most of the proprietors of works in the neighbourhood formed a company for constructing a reservoir, which might indeed rather be called an artificial lake, in one of the upper valleys of the adjacent range of hills. The most favourable site was found to be in one of the non-manufacturing districts, and here an unexpected difficulty presented itself. The proprietor of the piece of land selected for the purpose had more than his full share of the prejudices which many country-gentlemen entertain against mill-owners and manufacturers; he refused to allow them to form any establishment on his grounds. The price offered was, however, a very large one, and, in the contest between purse and prejudice, purse is likely to triumph in the end. An ungracious assent to the terms offered was intimated, but a clause was intro-

duced into the deed of transfer strictly prohibiting the company from erecting any building on the ground, and I was informed that this clause was so literally construed that they could not even obtain permission to build a house for their watchman. This is, I believe, an unparalleled instance of a gentleman binding his neighbours under a penalty not to make him rich in spite of himself, for the establishment of a mill on his estate would have raised the value of his land three or four fold, by the immediate demand it would have raised for plots of ground, for cottages, market-gardens, and dairy-farms. It is an improvement on the fable of the boy who killed the goose that laid golden eggs, for this worthy gentleman would not admit such a goose on his premises.

Manchester, same day.

THROUGH the kindness of a friend I have obtained some of the statistics of distress in Bolton, through which I passed this morning. The diminution of wages in the town is calculated at 200,000*l.* annually; but I am persuaded that the amount is much greater. On the other hand, the increased price of food requires an increase of expenditure of 118,000*l.*

annually. The injury done to the working population by diminishing the amount of employment and increasing the price of food—both of which evils are obvious results from the same cause—must be estimated at 320,000*l.* annually, or about 1000*l.* for every working-day. In plain terms, our system of protection takes 1000*l.* away from the wages of the operatives of Bolton every day of their lives. No wonder that under such circumstances they should have sunk into destitution, and that their misery should go on increasing with accelerated velocity. Let us just for a moment cast a glance at the amount of relief sent under such circumstances. A Government commissioner has been sent down to superintend the distribution of 500*l.* among the suffering people; so that the splendid boon of permanent relief to the operatives is just one-half of the sum fiscally subtracted from their wages every working day in the year. Is this mockery, or is it reality? Wisely has it been said that truth is stranger than fiction. Had such conduct been attributed to the *Jinns* or *Afreets* of Oriental romance, we should have turned from the tale, shocked by its monstrous improbability.

The loss to the working-man has been estimated, but how are we to estimate the loss to the nation? At the risk of being censured for harping too frequently on one string, I must again and again repeat that every day during which a working-man remains un-

employed inflicts a double loss on the nation; he enters into the non-productive, and therefore all his consumption is so much withdrawn from the nation's capital: to which must be added the further loss of all the value which his industry would have conferred on the materials in the preparation of which he might have been engaged. This is a point very much neglected, but it is one to which the income-tax gives peculiar importance at the present moment; that tax must be paid either out of profits or out of capital: if it be paid out of capital, the result, at no very distant date, must be a national bankruptcy: to pay it out of profits requires that industry should be at work producing profits, for all profits are the creation of labour. Many will say that I am merely repeating trite truisms, but your Lordship knows well that there is very little difference between a neglected and an unperceived truth. Now, I am not aware of any truths more ostentatiously neglected at the present day than the immense national value of employed industry, and the immense national loss arising from unemployed industry. When we deprive a labourer of employment we inflict a direct injury on him, but we also inflict no very indirect injury on ourselves: we take a share in the maintenance of his non-productive existence, and we also divide amongst us the amount of his contributions to the maintenance of the non-productive classes of the community. Men do not and will not see the importance of the labour-

ing classes to the nation. It is to them we must attribute the amazing increase of the value of property in Lancashire, amounting to 6300 per cent. in 150 years. And it is evidenced by the marked disparity in the progressive improvement of places which border closely upon each other, and possess nearly the same natural advantages. This disparity was ably explained by Mr. Henry Ashworth in his statistical paper from which I have already quoted very liberally. He says, in reference to a table exhibiting rates of increase, varying from more than 50,000 to less than 2000 per cent., "The only solution which can be given is, that in those places where the genius, enterprise, and industry of the people have been developed, and have had to encounter no sort of local hindrances, the prosperity of the district has proceeded with a steady onward course; whilst, in those other places which have not progressed with equal rapidity, there must have been an absence of native enterprise; a want of mines, roads, or canals; or a disinclination somewhere, perhaps on the part of the owners, to allow the natural advantages of the country to be turned to the best account.

"It has followed, nevertheless, that advantages have accrued to those localities where manufacturing industry has met with little or no encouragement; but such advantages have chiefly been derived to the land from the improved market furnished by an adjacent population for the productions of the soil. In

this way manufacturing industry has not only raised the prosperity of the places in which it was developed, but has extended its benefits to all the farming localities of the neighbourhood; raising the rental of *mere* LAND, in some cases 1500, and in others as much as 3000 per cent."

Is it anything short of national madness to sacrifice the manufacturing industry which has so immensely raised the value of land, and which is still capable of raising its value much higher, under the pretence of giving to the value of land a protection which such extensive landholders as the Marquesses of Lansdowne and Grosvenor, the Earls Fitzwilliam, Spencer, and Leicester, declare to be utterly nugatory, if not pernicious? I shall quote from Mr. Ashworth's paper a very striking example of the difference between a place where manufacturing industry has been rejected and a locality in which it has been cherished and developed:—

"The case of West-Houghton, near Bolton, presents a feature somewhat remarkable in the history of the cotton manufacture. In the year 1812, the first, or one of the first, power-loom factories ever established was in that township. The outrages of the Luddites of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, occurring at that period, rendered it an unpropitious time for the introduction of machinery. Outrage was begun in the neighbourhood, which ended in the destruction of the mill by incendiary violence. The consequences of

this rash act were not such as infatuated ignorance would have led the people to anticipate; namely, the obliteration of the invention of the power-loom. On the contrary, it merely took its flight from persecution, and, apparently with a sagacity almost instinctive, located itself in the neighbourhood of Staly Bridge, upon the confines of four counties, a place almost out of observation before the introduction of the cotton manufacture. In this place it has been allowed to remain in quietude, diffusing prosperity on every hand.

"The records which relate to population and value of property are not very easily accessible, because the places are attached to different counties. Some idea however of the general prosperity of the district may be inferred from the following accounts published in Edwin Butterworth's 'Statistics of Lancashire.' In 1814 there were in Staly Bridge twelve cotton manufacturing establishments, chiefly upon a small scale; and in 1841 there were thirty-two establishments, mostly upon a large scale, employing from 9000 to 10,000 workpeople, and having at work 536,000 spindles and 5000 power-looms.

"The accounts which relate to one of the parishes, that of Ashton-under-Lyne, the only one comprised within that district to which we have access, show that the annual value of Ashton parish has advanced, since 1815, from the sum of 33,548*l.* to 143,803*l.*

"We may now return, perhaps instructively, to the

case of West-Houghton, and inquire how it has fared with that township, following the expulsion of the power-loom. The people have adhered principally to their former employment of hand-loom weaving, a branch of trade which has every year continued to decline.

The population in		1811	was	3810
„	„	1821	„	4211
„	„	1831	„	4500
„	„	1841	„	4527

The value of the township for the

county assessment in	. .	1815	was	7,377*l.*
„	„	1829	„	9,564*l.*
„	„	1841	„	10,978*l.*

The locality of West-Houghton possesses an excellent coal-field and an industrious population; therefore, the departure of manufacturing enterprise might be deemed an untoward circumstance. The coal-field has since become more extensively opened, thereby adding to the value of the rateable property, and increasing the range of employment to the people. It may, however, be deserving of remark, how much more rapidly would the prosperity of the neighbourhood have advanced had manufactures been promoted, affording employment to the people, and consuming their coals on the spot, rather than having them raised, as they now are, to be consumed in distant places, or sent abroad. Manufacturing enterprise has not again been attracted thither; the destitution of

the people has continued gradually to proceed, and at the present time that place is the poorest of the twenty-five townships comprising the Bolton Union; nearly one-fourth of its population are paupers;* and the reduced state of the farmers may be estimated from the fact that very many of them cannot pay their rents in full, and that some of them pay instalments as low as five shillings at once in liquidation of their poor-rates."

To return to Great Bolton: it is rated to the county at 84,000*l.* annually, but the actual property out of which rates are paid does not exceed 31,000*l.* annually, or less than one-half, and even this amount must be still further diminished if the existing distress should continue and extend. An inquiry has been made into the condition of 1000 operative families, consisting of 5300 persons, and their earnings barely average 1*s.* 2*d.* per head per week; that is to say, about the same sum per week, or rather less, than they had when in work per day. For these 5300 persons there were only 1553 beds of any description, and of what description the most of them must have been may be estimated from the fact that only 466 of them, or less than one-third, are furnished with blankets; the rest

* "The population is . . . . . 4527.
Paupers: In-door 49
Out-door . . 946
——995."

have pieces of sacking, fragments of carpets, or the clothes worn during the day. Their proportion of furniture is just two chairs for every three persons. Now, my Lord, nearly all these families were once, and that very recently, comfortable and respectable; each of them can show you from five to twenty, or even thirty, duplicates for the clothes or furniture they have pawned in order to obtain a supply of food.

During the whole of this melancholy tour I found no class of men in business complain more loudly of the pressure of the times than the pawnbrokers. They had gone on advancing loans on pledges, until they had nearly, and in some cases quite, exhausted their capital; and they then found themselves unable to procure a sale for their unredeemed pledges. One of them—I need not particularize the locality—assured me with tears in his eyes that he believed himself to be standing on the very verge of bankruptcy; and that, though he had capital to the amount of several thousand pounds invested in his business, he was at a loss to raise money to pay the current expenses of his family. I found also, what I had not anticipated, that butchers were very considerable sufferers: their distress at least cannot be attributed to machinery and over-production: it is traced to a very simple cause,—the poor are no longer able to purchase the coarse parts of the carcases, as they were accustomed to do; they remain to waste on the butcher's hands, and destroy whatever profits he may

have derived from the sale of the prime pieces. I myself saw in Manchester women and children purchasing halfpenny and penny-worths of pickle; I could not guess for what purpose, and so I inquired: they told me that they used it to give the flavour of meat to the tasteless vegetable messes which they were driven to consume. You have often heard in Ireland of "potatoes and point;"—that is to say, when potatoes are served up to a poor family, a herring is placed in the middle of the table, which no one must eat, but at which each may point and enjoy its ideal flavour, if he can raise his imagination to take in the remote conception. It is not very unlikely that the men of Lancashire will have to practice some such lesson in ideality; but they are men of more reason than fancy, and I fancy that after a few trials they would go in quest of realities of a very different, and perhaps dangerous, description.

The state of the hucksters and small grocers is past recording; they have disappeared; their dwellings are empty and their shops tenantless. Those who had saved any money are expatriated, and those who had made no provision have gone to the workhouse. And here I must beg your Lordship's attention to one result of the present distress which I do not remember to have seen noticed,—the great and increasing emigration of men of small capitals, varying from one hundred pounds to two and three thousand. Several such have gone to foreign lands from the towns of

Bury and Bolton, transferring their industry, their capital, and their enterprise to distant lands. On this subject I had some hopes of obtaining accurate statistical information from Liverpool, but, on applying to some of the brokers and ship-agents, I found that it was impossible to obtain any correct account of the number of persons or the amount of money thus exported. It may be remembered that just previous to the commencement of the first American war there was a similar emigration of small capitalists and farmers from the North of Ireland and from Scotland, and that those men in the subsequent struggle were the most desperate and inveterate of the enemies of England. I have had an opportunity of conversing with some who were on their road to emigrate, and I found them rancorously bitter against those whom they believed to have produced the necessity for their expatriation. One of them quoted, from some history of the American war, a remark to the effect that during the earlier stages of that conflict the American riflemen invariably aimed at bringing down the British officers and sparing the men, attributing the war not to the English people but to the aristocracy: he added that he believed the anecdote to be true, and that he yet hoped to have an opportunity of acting in a similar manner. Emigration has been proposed as an alleviation, and even as a remedy, for the present distress; but such specimens of emigration as I have seen sadly aggravate the calamitous condition of the country.

We are sending those abroad whom it should be our policy to keep at home, and we are keeping those at home whom it would be no great harm to send abroad. So far as I can learn, the tide of emigration from Lancashire does not set in the direction of the British colonies; and if it did, that circumstance would not in my view much mend the matter. The difference between a British colony and a foreign settlement appears to be little more than this,—that the former costs us a large sum to protect its infancy, and when it attains maturity is not one whit a better customer than the foreigner. Emigration, as at present conducted, takes away a very large amount of working capital,—that capital too being in small sums, which is to some extent the most available form for working it, and undoubtedly the form which develops the greatest quantity of industry in the possessor, since, in order to live, he must make up for the deficiency of his money by a greater exertion of energy and labour. We thus export, at the same moment, capital, energy, and industry; and we send men to increase abroad the hostility to England which unfortunately is rife both in the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

Some persons refuse to believe in the extent of the distress in the cotton-trade, because a new mill happens to be in process of erection near Bolton. This mill, however, is not a new addition to the business, nor will it when completed enlarge production to any considerable extent. It is the property of a person

who has been long in the business, and who is, in fact, only removing from an old establishment to a new one. The mill has taken a very long time to build, and this may show that the proprietor's hopes of profit are not of the most ardent description.

Having now returned to Manchester, and the meeting of the British Association having begun, I must limit my observations to places in the vicinity of that town. I cannot do so, however, without quoting, from a parliamentary document which has reached me on my road, a just testimony to the high character which the operatives have sustained during their present unparalleled sufferings, written by the commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of the distressed population of Stockport. May it teach the nation to appreciate the worth of those men whose very existence is in jeopardy, whose lives, or at least whose all which makes life valuable, depend on the wisdom and discretion of Parliament!—

"In the course of these inquiries the general character and condition of the operatives employed in the cotton-trade have been peculiarly objects of our observation. We have seen that, in an ordinary state of the trade, those of the operatives who are employed (as the mass of them are) in connexion with steam-power and machinery appear to command, by the value of their labour, the means of enjoyment of the comforts of life to an extent and degree unknown to a large portion of the population of this country;

and there is little doubt that persons so circumstanced must consume, in a degree which far exceeds the proportion of their numbers, the natural produce of this and of foreign countries, thereby contributing largely to the prosperity of other classes of their countrymen, as well as to those sources of revenue by which the national liabilities are in great part sustained.

"We find, in connexion with the large earnings of this class, industrious habits of no common stamp, regulated and secured in great measure by the peculiar nature of their employment; and a degree of intelligence already much in advance of other classes of the working people, and still growing with the general growth of popular education. It appears also that, when in the enjoyment of prosperity, they avail themselves to a great extent of the advantages of provident institutions, and that partly through this, and partly through other circumstances, equally creditable to their character as a working people, they avoid almost altogether dependence upon poor-rates. On the occurrence of general distress, we find them neither a pauperised mass nor readily admitting pauperism among them; but struggling against adversity, beating far and wide for employment, and in many cases leaving their country for foreign climates rather than depend upon any other resources for subsistence than those of their own industry and skill. Those among them who have not been able or willing

to leave a place where at present their labour is of little or no value have been found enduring distress with patience, and abstaining, sometimes to the injury of health, from making any application for relief; while others, who have been driven reluctantly to that extremity, we have seen receiving a degree of relief sufficient only to support life, often with thankfulness and gratitude, and generally without murmur or complaint.

"We feel assured that the sufferings of a population whose general character and condition are such as we have described them will meet with sympathy and consideration from all classes of their fellow-subjects; and that the interests of that branch of trade which has furnished such a population with employment will be held entitled to peculiar attention from the legislature of the country.

"We have, &c.

(Signed) "A. POWER.

"E. TWISLETON.

"*To the Poor Law Commissioners.*"

I will not weaken the effect of this testimony by adding one word of comment, beyond stating that it is not less applicable to Bolton, Wigan, &c., than to Stockport.

LETTER XI.

Stockport, ——, 1842.

ALTHOUGH Stockport is locally situated in the county of Cheshire, it belongs, commercially, to Lancashire, and it is still further identified with the palatinate by the feelings, the interests, and the spirit of its inhabitants. When first I became acquainted with the town, about five years ago, I believed that there was no place in the world better assured of a long and continuous career of commercial prosperity. The incomes of operative families varied from one to three pounds per week; they lived in comfortable tenements and exhibited much pride of station, rarely mixing with the mere hand-labourers and the navigators and excavators employed on the railways and other public works. Their children were more carefully tended than I found to be the case in Manchester and Liverpool: it was rare to hear of lost children being taken up by the police in Stockport; and this attention to the young was combined with a system of providing for the aged, which is thus clearly explained by the Commissioners of Inquiry:—

"Even the aged members of a manufacturing community have a different social position from that of the same class of persons in many other parts of England, so small a number of them, in proportion to the population, being found dependent on the poor-rates.

"The disposition and ability of the operatives to support their aged relatives is one explanation of this circumstance, and it may be added that many of this class, especially aged females, afford a service very appropriate to their condition, and of not inconsiderable value, by keeping house and taking care of the youngest children while the working part of the family are absent at their work, and while the elder of the children, though not of age to work, are absent at school. With such assistance in the care of her household, during her absence at the factory, many an industrious married woman is enabled to add 8*s*., 10*s*., or 12*s*. weekly to the income brought in by her husband and the elder of the children. It is not uncommon for aged females to become domesticated for the purpose of affording service of this nature in the families of those who have no elderly relations to support, and some of them are said to earn a livelihood by preparing and carrying to the factories the refreshments which the hands sometimes prefer taking on the premises to going home and returning during the period allowed for their meals.

"The relief lists for the township of Hyde (popula-

tion in 1841, 10,151) present, for the quarter ended in September 1838, only seven aged males and nine aged females as the whole number of that class receiving out-door or in-door relief from the poor-rates; and in the quarter ended December 1841 the total number of this class was not increased."

The township of Hyde, adjacent to Stockport, was the most interesting locality to every lover of his kind that I had at that period ever visited. Mr. Felkin, of Nottingham, was so struck with its economy, that he drew up a statistical account of its condition, which he read to the British Association; the document excited much attention at the time; it was copied into nearly all the newspapers of Great Britain and America; I have inserted it in my 'Natural History of Society,' but I cannot bring myself to turn to it now, for a sad check has been given to the social happiness which I then saw growing, extending, and increasing; abundance of food has been changed into superabundance of famine; the land of plenty has become the land of destitution.

I was justified in the anticipations of continued and increasing prosperity which I formed at that period: the immense amount of the capital invested in buildings, works, and machinery pledged the proprietor to continue employment when profits were low or wholly gone, because to stop the steam-engines or the water-wheels would necessarily deteriorate his investment to a greater degree than any of the moderate

losses which might arise from the ordinary fluctuations of trade. In such a district it was reasonable to believe that "scenes of sudden and widely extended istress are not of common occurrence, and it would be only after a long-continued period of depression, involving the successive ruin and failure of the several capitalists, that we might expect to find the factory population of a large manufacturing town extensively involved in distress."

The prosperity of Stockport is no more. "*Fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teucrorum.*" It is now a town in a state of social dissolution, and ere many weeks elapse, if something be not done to revive its trade, the inhabitants will have lost all chance of relief on earth, and will have nothing left but an appeal to the justice of the eternal God. I believe that there will be no outbreak; I do not dread from this instructed and intelligent people the violence of the colliers or the secret malice of Swing. They have been subject to a gradual process of exhaustion for a period of nearly four years; they have seen distress coming on with silent but certain strides; mill after mill has closed, and in last August two of the largest in the entire district stopped nearly at the same time, and threw more than two thousand hands at once out of work. During this period the appeals to the people of Stockport, not to the compassion, but to the justice of their countrymen, have been frequent, firm, and respectful. They have only besought of their rulers not to turn

away the customers who stood at their doors proffering food and employment, in order to swell the rents of those who could not give them a sufficient supply of the one, and who were neither able nor willing to afford the other. Their appeals have been disregarded, and I fear they are not likely to be renewed. The operatives of Stockport have become a broken-spirited and a broken-hearted population; their despair has assumed the form of listlessness and apathy; words of hope are received with a shake of the head and a melancholy smile. "All that remains for me is to lay me down and die" was the expression of a fine though faded young woman, when I expressed a hope that times would yet mend.

In the account which I am about to give of the state of distress in Stockport I shall quote very largely from the Commissioners' Report, because, so far as my own observations have extended, their statements are more than borne out by existing facts, and also because their statements possess a greater extent and accuracy of information than a stranger could acquire in a casual visit. The peculiar aspect of distress in Stockport is thus faithfully delineated by the Commissioners:—

"Generally, and with few exceptions, the appearance of the dwelling-houses was not such as, of itself, to impress us with the existence of destitution in any great degree. There was in many cases a fair show of furniture remaining, the indication of a considerable

degree of comfort formerly existing; sometimes a clock, frequently some chairs and tables, and occasionally pictures, of no great value perhaps, but the presence of which did not at first view consist with the supposition of extreme distress.

"We had no reason, however, to derive from these circumstances the impression that many of the parties had prematurely or unnecessarily applied for parochial relief; we found, on the contrary, that articles of bedding and clothing had been parted with to a great extent, either by pawning or selling, for the purpose of obtaining food previously to application being made to the Guardians, and that the Guardians had frequently found it necessary at that inclement season of the year to supply the deficiencies thus created. The state of the bedding and clothing was, in fact, very generally defective, and it may be observed that such articles are far more easy to dispose of than furniture.

"It generally appeared, upon inquiry, that the rent was greatly in arrear, and the landlord's claim upon the furniture may sometimes have prevented its being made away with, and its non-removal would in such cases perhaps be only a mark of forbearance on his part.

"It was very seldom that we had to remark the total absence of food from the dwelling; and in no one instance that we observed was the house without a fire through want of fuel. These circumstances,

however, must not be taken as negativing the existence of destitution. They rather tended to show that, if destitution existed, it was, to a certain extent, materially relieved; and it will be recollected that our visits were almost wholly to the houses of persons receiving parochial relief. We found, in fact, in these observations practical proof of the excellent effects of the system of relieving wholly in kind, which (as will hereafter be more particularly pointed out) had been adopted both by the Guardians of the Union and the dispensers of the charitable fund.

"The personal appearance of those we visited, more especially that of the children, did not indicate ill health; but there was a great degree of dejection and apparent mental depression in the countenances and manner of many of the heads of families and other of the working hands. We found them usually sitting in a state of listless despondence near the fire, and, so far as we could judge by the answers they made to our inquiries, they appeared to be without hope for the future, until some revival of the trade should take place at Stockport, or, as they frequently expressed it in their own way, 'until the mill was set agate again.'

"We were much struck, in the great majority of the cases, by the absence of that mode of thinking and that kind of demeanour which is usually incidental to habits of confirmed pauperism. There was no attempt to exaggerate, either to us or the relieving

officer, the distressing circumstances of their condition, and no attempt, so far as we could observe, to suppress anything which had occurred to them of a more favourable complexion. They freely stated what additional income they had got, either by obtaining employment, from the funds of the charity, or from any other source. This was the general character of those cases we visited: there will, however, be found noted in our memoranda a few exceptions in the cases of families whom we have described as 'accustomed to receive relief.'

"There were not more than one or two instances in the whole in which we heard anything in the nature of a murmur or complaint. There were, on the other hand, a considerable number who expressed themselves extremely thankful for the relief allowed in food or otherwise, by the guardians; and, in some instances, *the weekly allowance had been voluntarily resigned immediately on their having obtained some other means of support.*"

The recent progress of the distress is described in the following terms by Mr. Forster, the intelligent chairman of the Stockport Union. All that need be added to his clear and comprehensive statement is, that during this year the deteriorating process has not only continued, but has been greatly aggravated in its intensity:—

"There was not much variation in the number of applications made to the Board of Guardians until the

summer of 1841. There had been an increase of distress in consequence of the dropping of wages and the price of provisions before that time. After the very prosperous years of 1835 and 1836, provisions became dearer and wages declined, so that a visible feeling existed in the town of the approach of distress. In 1839 the district of Hazelgrove was in considerable distress through the depression of the silk trade, and that district in consequence had become much pauperized, most of the families of the hand-loom weavers residing there having begun to apply for relief in aid of wages, that is, not through sickness, but from the wages being inadequate to the support of the family when in full work.

" There was no particular pressure on the poor-rates of the township of Stockport until the year 1841, in which year several failures took place; but previously to this time there had been much excitement and considerable suffering among the families of the poor, in consequence of turn-outs for wages, the hands being not willing to take the reduced wages offered them, and many mills stopped altogether, or worked short time for a considerable period, that is, for several months previously to the stoppage of Lane's mill. Lane's mill stopped some time in August last, and not very long after that Carr's mill gave over working in consequence of the death of one of the partners, Mr. Smith.

" These two mills threw out of employment about

3000 hands. Lane's mill alone employed about 1700. From the 5th of August, 1841, the pressure on the poor-rates has been progressively increasing.

"There was a mill belonging to Stocks and Son, situate in Heaton Norris, within the borough of Stockport, which stopped nearly about the same time with the others, through failure of the firm; and these three stoppages, together with the effects of the previous turn-outs and other causes, caused the applications to our Board to become very numerous.

"Have there been, to your knowledge, any other establishments thrown out of work recently?—There are in the borough in the whole, I believe, 17 mills standing, besides many that are working short time, and that have been working short time during nearly the whole of the year 1841, but that number have ceased work from time to time during a larger period than I have adverted to. Brown and Powell's, so far as I remember, was the first of the large establishments which failed; that was about three years ago.

"How do you account for the pressure on the poor-rates having been inconsiderable before the stoppage of Lane's mill, so many establishments having previously stopped work?—I account for it in this manner: that the persons thrown out of employment, either by turn-outs or otherwise, sought work in other places, and many of them procured it; they did not

attempt to come upon the poor-rates so long as employment was to be found in any other market.

"The population of Stockport is naturally a fluctuating population, having increased, within my recollection, from 12,000, or thereabouts, in 1790, to nearly 60,000 at the present time: under such circumstances the population have less difficulty in removing in search of work than elsewhere. Factory operatives have no implements or tools to carry away with them, but merely their own labour; and wherever they can meet with what they call 'a good shop,' they avail themselves of it, and send for their families afterwards."

I shall now select some of the individual cases examined by the Commissioners: they will both illustrate and confirm the accounts which I have given of the aspect of distress in the north-eastern parts of Lancashire.

"Luke Butterworth, aged 24, spinner. Wife and two children; wages when in work were 22*s.* or 23*s.* weekly; thrown out when Lane's stopped, five months since; belonged to the order of Independent Odd Fellows; went on tramp with a card of his order for three or four months; went to Hull, then to Nottingham, and through the towns of Lancashire, seeking work as a spinner. The card entitled him to

receive 3*d.* or 4*d.*, or more, at each lodge in the towns he visited, and by these means he lived while on tramp; is in arrear with his contribution to the order, that is, 1*s.* 6*d.* per month; they sometimes excuse these payments, not being willing to exclude a member who is in real necessity; his card is now out; it runs only for six months, and a man must wait six months longer before he can take out another card. He had sold his blankets for food before applying to the town, and the landlord had taken the furniture for rent; he has been allowed 3*s.* weekly in food for a few weeks by the guardians; without this they must have been lost; is very thankful for that assistance, which is still continued; present furniture, three chairs, one table, chest of drawers, bedstead, but no blankets.

"F. Brown, aged 39. Wife and four children not working; a dresser, in employ at Glossop 12 months ago; earned then 20*s.* weekly; belongs to the parish of Godley, in Ashton-under-Line Union, which is not yet in operation for the relief of the poor. We had been directed to this house by a neighbour, who said there was great distress in it; we found the man sitting over the fire in a very desponding state; he came here from Glossop in July last, hoping to get employment; does not apply to the relieving officer of Stockport for relief, not wishing to be removed to his parish; instead of that he goes over to the overseer of Godley for relief, which is six miles from Stockport; first applied

to Godley about two months ago; they gave him then 1*s.*; went again next week, when they gave him 5*s.* to do for a fortnight, and he has since had from them 2*s.* 6*d.* weekly; is in arrear with his rent and rates; last rate 10*s.*; rent 2*s.* 4*d.* weekly. This man appeared much distressed in mind, but did not apply to the relieving officer (who attended us) for further relief.

"According to the present practice of the guardians, if relief were given to this family by the relieving officer for Stockport, they would be removed, unless the overseers of Godley should authorize the relief.

"William Allworth, hand-loom weaver in silk; wife and five children.

"This was another case pointed out by the relieving officer as one in which the proposal of the guardians to take one or two of the children into the workhouse had been for a long time resisted: at length they gave way, and two of the children went to the workhouse and remained there a month, and were doing well at the school, when they took them away again.

"The man not at home. The wife, on being asked about the children, said she had been to see them when at the workhouse; did not know but that they were well done by, but could not bear to have them anywhere but at home.

"John Daniels, silk-weaver; wife and five children. Took in the last piece it was six weeks to-morrow.

Being so long without work, had been obliged to apply to the town; but work had now at last come in; his rent was 1*s.* 6*d.*, and he had been accustomed to pay rates. Things were never so bad as now. There was a very bad time in the summer of 1826, not more than half work then; now it is only half work with lower wages than then.

"The guardians had, on his application, allowed 4*s.* a-week in provisions for a month, which was to them a very great assistance, for which they were very thankful.

"All their comings in had been about 8*s.* per week, including the relief. They had at best had only three meals a-day, and sometimes not more than two, or even one.

"Being asked to give an account of the three meals a-day, he said, 'We make our breakfast for seven of us of a teacupful of oatmeal made into thin porridge, together with some bread; at dinner we have about six pounds of potatoes, with salt and bread; the tea or supper, as you may call it, the same as at breakfast; in the whole about four pounds of bread daily, say 8*d.*, 2*d.* worth of potatoes, and 2*d.* worth of oatmeal, amounting to a shilling a-day for seven of us. This and 10*d.* a-week we have to pay for coal makes up the 8*s.* nearly; we are behind with rent; life,' he said, 'must be kept together; as long as we can we wish to live.'

"The relieving officer told us that, in consequence

of work coming in, this man had, of his own accord, just given up the allowance ordered by the guardians: his order was 4*s.* weekly for a month, which he had received for three weeks, and that, when the fourth payment was due, he went to the relieving officer and said, 'I will have no more relief: I have got one warp for myself, and a prospect of another for my wife.'

"James Pearson, silk-weaver, a widower, with six child renunder 13; 'One girl, on loom, sometimes earns a little besides myself; we are now all the workers for seven; some work went in to-day, a week's work, which will bring about 8*s.*, and we have got another cane.'

"'I buried my wife,' he said, '13th June last, which was the beginning of my trouble; never thought of relief till my wife was on her death-bed. When I married, I thought of nothing but just to keep respectable, and so I did till I lost my wife. Am now receiving weekly relief from the guardians, and am very thankful for it: we could not do without.'

"This man appeared very much distressed, and was described to us as a very industrious, honest man, who endeavoured to do the best he could for his family. He had had 5*s.* weekly in food for nine months past.

"William Cardwell, aged 50, labourer; wife and six children; came to Hyde from Steeple Clayton, in Buckinghamshire, six years ago; did very well the

first three or four years; children were employed in Messrs. John and Robert Ashton's mill; have not done so well of late years; in full work we had altogether 1*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.* coming in weekly, besides a boy who earned 6*s.* a-week until he offended his master, and was turned out about six months ago; out of that he paid 3*s.* per week for rent, 3*d.* for water, and 1*s.* 6*d.* for coal. The mill stopped work about five weeks ago; had put by nothing; could not have done that; am now receiving from the Buckingham Union the sum of 8*s.* a-week, paid through the Stockport Union.

"William Clegg, power-loom weaver; thrown out of employ when Lane's stopped, five months ago; used to get 12*s.* weekly himself; has a boy of 15, now earning 6*s.* or 7*s.*; a girl earning 3*s.*; no relief at present from the Union, but has been assisted from the relief fund.

"He had been receiving 4*s.* per week from the Guardians, but has just disappeared from the books, through his children getting employment.

"Watchman at Lane's (not a case of application for relief). Out of his employment since September last; he used to earn 15*s.* a week himself as watchman; wife and two children (total earnings not stated); house appears clean and comfortable, but the man appeared much depressed, and said he had kept selling things off for food; owed 11*s.* poor-rate; his rent 2*s.* 8½*d.* a week; had not applied for relief.

"Samuel Parry, wife and two children, six and four; was a dresser in Lane's mill, and used to earn 25*s.* a week on an average; lived in a house at 1*s.* 9*d.* rent; sold chairs, tables, bed and bedding, and left the house for the present one, which is a cellar, almost unfurnished; furniture, two tables and a stool; rent 8*d.* per week; had subscribed to a sick-club, and a penny-club for funerals; had not been able latterly to keep up his subscriptions; has in fact no means but his allowance from the Board, which is 2*s.* 6*d.* per week in food; has also had clogs from the Board.

"John Parry, the father of the last, a dresser also in Lane's mill, used to earn 26*s.* per week; is a widower with two sons, all out of work; has 3*s.* in food from the town.

"John Bridge, aged 38, a dresser in J. and R. Ashton's mill, until it stopped eight weeks ago; wife and seven children. Has been twice at Glossop looking for work; is there now, and has at last got work. They have been receiving casual relief in food, to the amount of 5*s.* per week recently. The woman said, 'She and the children were going to join him immediately;' and on the relieving-officer asking, 'Shall you want no more, then?' She answered, 'Oh, no! we shall want no more now he has got into work.' The officer said, however, there was another payment due under the order of the Guardians, and that she should have it, for which he was very thankful.

"Samuel Barlow, print taker-off; wife and six children. The whole family earned in the print-mill, when in full time, 2*l.* 10*s.* weekly. Belong to Radcliffe, in Bury Union, and are now receiving 5*s.* weekly in food, by authority of the Guardians of that Union.

"The whole number of hands thrown out by the stoppage of the print-works was about 80.

"The mill and print-works referred to in the above cases, as having stopped work for the present, were those of Messrs. John and Robert Ashton.

"The mills of Mr. Thomas Ashton were working full time, and we visited some families employed in those mills, which had migrated from the south of England, and which still continued in the receipt of full wages.

"The following are examples of migrant families now in full employment at Hyde.

"Thomas White, labourer; wife and 11 children; five of them only under working age; the eldest girl 21. We found the woman at home: united earnings of the family 50*s.* a week. She appeared in great spirits, and being asked whether she would like to go back to the south, said she would rather be transported.

"John Cawthorn, carter; came to Hyde from South Creek, in Norfolk; wife and nine children, of whom five were in the factory; united earnings of self and

family were 2*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* weekly. He said he was quite satisfied, and would not like to go back.

"We have introduced the two last cases from our memoranda, as showing the condition of factory operatives when in full employment, and as illustrating the nature of the reverse which is sustained by the stoppage of a mill.

"The evidence of the medical officers of Stockport Union will be referred to with peculiar interest, in reference to the degree in which the health of those of the operatives who are suffering distress has been affected by the privations which they have undergone.

"All these gentlemen agree in observing that the food consumed by the operatives now in distress is of an inferior description to that which they have been accustomed to use in prosperous times.

"Dr. Rayner says, 'Both the quantity and quality of their food is inferior to what it was formerly; bread and potatoes constitute now the principal part of their diet. They used to get meat, tea, and coffee, whereas now, as a substitute for tea, they get mint-leaves, or some other herbs of a similar kind, such as marjoram and sage, and they scarcely ever get animal food.'

"These remarks apply to those who are now out of employment.

"Mr. Blackshaw says, 'A great many of the

families exist upon potatoes and meal, and occasionally a little animal food.

"The common food in this township, Stockport, is bacon and a few potatoes. What I mean is, that the poor have not a sufficient quantity of nutritious food.

"Do they not eat wheaten bread?—Yes; I reckon that as a more nutritious kind of food than what I have above mentioned; but that is not in general the main article of their diet, under the present circumstances of distress.

"Do you mean, then, that wheaten bread is a common article of their food in prosperous times?—Certainly, in a great proportion; and they then eat much more animal food: in fact, when trade is good, the people of Stockport are well off and live well."

From the evidence of Mr. Blackshaw in another part of the Report I shall extract his statement of two cases, the circumstances of which have attracted a considerable share of the public attention.

"In the report of a committee of inquiry into the state of the town, it is stated that the surgeon (a medical officer of the Union) expresses strongly, and without hesitation, his opinion that two persons were brought to a premature grave by the want of food. Are you the medical officer alluded to in that statement?—I am; and in consequence of that statement having been made public at a town's meeting, I was addressed by the clerk of the Union, and was required

to state whether there had been any neglect in the relieving officer; and I then wrote an answer to the clerk, explaining that one of the cases adverted to was that of John Frost, who had sickened in consequence of his privations previous to his application for relief, and that, on my mentioning the case to the Board, I was requested to order what the emergency of the case required; that the man, notwithstanding, died within a week after he had made application. I stated also that the other case was that of Sarah Parry, who was attended to by my own hand, through the relieving officer, I having written a note to say what she required; and that I therefore considered that no blame could be attached to any individual in either case. I consider, in both cases, the parties suffered in consequence of the privations they endured previous to their applying for relief.

"Did you ask either of those parties why they had not made an earlier application for relief?—I did, in the case of Frost, I recollect; but I am not aware that I did in Parry's case.

"And what answer did Frost give?—His answer was, that he wished to go on as long as he could before he made application to the Board. That is a very common reason with some of the poor.

"From what cause do you consider that the unwillingness to make such application arises?—I ascribe it to a spirit of independence; and many of them

would rather sacrifice all their furniture than apply to the parish. This, however, is far from being the case with all.

"Will you specify more particularly the privations which, in your opinion, led to the death of Parry and Frost?—Frost was a person who had previously gained a livelihood as a jobber for butchers; and he was thrown out of employment, owing to the general distress of the times. He had a wife and six or seven small children, and I have no doubt that he fell ill through deficiency of food and clothing, and depression of mind.

"Were any other members of the family ill at the same time?—Not any.

"Did you at any time find the family without food?—No; but I did not visit them until after relief had been afforded them by the relieving officer: but I wish to state that this was not exactly a case of starvation; the man had diseased lungs; and I do not think that he would have recovered under any circumstances; but I have no doubt that his death was accelerated by his privations.

"Was any inquest held in Frost's case?—No; and I did not consider it necessary. The wife and the children are now receiving relief from the Union.

"What were the circumstances of Parry's case?—She was the wife of a dresser, and was of advanced age; she had grown-up children, who were receiving relief at the time; she was living with her husband,

and with some of the grown-up children; they were all out of employment. Parry had been an exceedingly improvident man; he had been in the habit of receiving 2*l.* or 3*l.* a week in prosperous times, and he had been a very intemperate man; but he had been out of work ever since the stoppage of Lane's Mill, in last August, and had only been partially employed for some time previously. He had sold or pledged the greater part of his furniture previous to his application for relief. I visited the case about the latter end of October. I found Sarah Parry suffering from diseased bowels; and from her appearance, which was exceedingly emaciated, and from statements made to me by her relatives, I am convinced that her disease had been brought on by the want of food, or by the use of improper food. Her husband told me that they had not had a full meal of animal food for six months previously, but I did not precisely believe that at the time when he told it to me; still I have no doubt that he had suffered great privations.

"Do you feel assured that there was no other cause of Sarah Parry's death except want of food, or the use of improper food?—I consider that to have been the exciting cause. I mean by the exciting cause, that which brings disease, previously otherwise existing, into operation.

"What then was the proximate cause of her death?—The proximate cause was diseased bowels, with ge-

neral exhaustion. She was not more than 60 years of age. I remember her being in more prosperous circumstances.

"Was there any inquest held in this case?—There was not; and I did not consider it necessary to give any information which would lead to the holding of an inquest.

"Was the case properly attended to after application was made to the relieving officer?—It was; and everything which I ordered was supplied."

If it would not inconveniently extend this letter, I should be very glad to have extracted the important evidence of the other medical officers, but there still remain one or two cases to which I wish attention to be particularly directed.

"William Beech.—Wife and seven children, eldest 15. The relieving officer apprised us in this case that the guardians had for a long time pressed this man to allow two of his children to come to the workhouse, and be educated in the children's school, but they had, for more than a year past, although in great need, stood out against this proposal. We had seen the man at the board of guardians the day before, when the proposal was renewed to him; he persisted in refusing; he said, 'I don't dispute the children would be well done by, but if one can't content one's self it's no use.' He said, further, they were badly

off for clothing, bedding, and short of food, and applied for petticoats and clogs for the children. Relief committee had given them some bedding.

"The guardians, having heard the case, ordered six flannel petticoats, two pair of clogs, and 3*s*. 6*d*. weekly for food for one month.

"We now visited the cottage, and saw the wife and the children. There were three looms, seldom more than two going of late; not above 7*s*. a week for many weeks; rent, 2*s*. weekly; there was no food in the house, except a little which had been given them by the guardian of the parish; they had had a dinner of potatoes boiled in the jackets, with some salt. Her husband was gone to Stockport to fetch the relief which had been ordered the day before. The woman being asked as to her objection to let two of the seven children go to the workhouse, she said, 'It would be of no use if I should not have comfort in it; you may as well take my life as take my children; I would rather die than part with them; I'd rather go with 'em; you may take us all, and welcome.' The house is as clean as could be expected.

"This appeared to us a case of severe distress, and both man and wife were represented to us as most industrious and careful people: they were thankful for the relief afforded.

"William Hollowell.—Hand-loom weaver in silk; wife and four children; there were two of 19 and 14, whom they had recently lost, which had helped to

bring them to distress; three looms in the house, only one now in work; a cane came in to-day, the first for a month; in a fortnight we shall get 17*s.* 6*d.* for it.

"On the loss of his daughters, the man said, 'They were factory hands, lost, as we think, by cold caught in the cockloft, an upper room, where they were reeling, through the windows being blown out; the draughts came to their head, and it turned to consumption; one died about two years ago, the second about six weeks since. We were doing well before that; we had saved 20*l.*; through their illness and want of work together, it was gradually wasted. We have a good landlord, a particularly good fellow, or we should have been very hard pressed to pay our rent; he has let us run on nearly a twelvemonth.

"'We had nothing from the town when our first daughter died, but we had 3*l.* 19*s.* from a burying club; all our children are in a burying club; the payment is 1*d.* a month. I belong myself to the Noah's Ark, a silk club; the payment is 1*s.* 6*d.* a month. Trade has been very bad with us for several months; very little doing since Macclesfield Bank broke. I have been looked over for poor rates, but never troubled the town before the second girl died; have not parted with much; I did once, a few weeks ago, take a coat and pawn it, to pay a trifle of rent, that is all; I never did such a thing before; the relief committee have assisted us a little; the guardians have allowed us 4*s.* a week in food.

"'As to coal, we are doing with 10 cwt. I got in about three weeks since, when I raised 2*s*. 11*d*., and my brother-in-law said he would help me to draw it: we did so with a hand-cart for about two miles, when I got a strain which I have felt ever since; the carting would have cost 1*s*.'

"This man was described to us as an industrious good sort of man, in real necessity.

"George Willett, aged 45.—Labourer; wife and six children, five girls and a lad; came to Hyde from Hardcastle in the Buckingham Union; he jobs himself as an out-door labourer at 2*s*. 6*d*. per day, when he could get work; earnings of the whole family were 2*l*. 8*s*. 6*d*., in John and Robert Ashton's mill, now stopped eight weeks.

"Pawned spade, scythe, and pole, clock, shawls, and gowns in the pop-shop; bedding bad, but none had been parted with; have received pay for five weeks from Hyde; 8*s*. per week is the present allowance; the family had been wonderful well at Hyde, still he could hardly meet his payments; they required meat of a better quality there than in Buckinghamshire; they had done better in provisions, and wore out more clothes.

"The cottage in Bucks was not so good as the one they were now in; the woman said, if she returned there, she should be double in a week from cold; one of the girls was at work making lace, with cushion and bobbins, which she had brought with her out of Buck-

inghamshire; the family would do well, relieving officer says, only the man drinks.

"*Query*. Buckingham Union authorised the relief?—Yes, at the discretion of the Stockport Union.

"Charles Pownall.—Silk weaver; a widower, with six children; three looms standing out of four; only half work for three months past; has had two or three weeks' allowance of 5*s*. in food from the town; owes a good deal to shopkeepers. 'Trust,' he said, 'is shut up; they will trust me no more.'

"He said, 'The distress is owing to bad legislation. Landed gentlemen will not let trade open, because it will hurt them; but if corn was cheaper it would never do any good until taxes came off. *It's the national debt; we had no voice in contracting that debt, and I don't think we are liable to pay it.* That is the opinion of the working men; I don't know what the gentlemen think about it. The working men get together and talk of these things; I have not been much among them for twelve months. There will be no good without a law to fix wages.' Being asked whether such a law would force masters to find work, he said 'No.' He added, 'There's another thing; there's too many salaries; this Government's as bad as the last in that; pensions, and things of that sort.'"

I may add here that Pownall's sentiments respecting the national debt are not singular; I heard similar declarations made in various parts of Lancashire; and one

operative worded his argument in such an original and forcible form that I at once copied it into my notes. His words were, "The national debt was contracted to protect property, but the burthen of its payment has been thrown upon industry; now Property has no more right to ask Industry to pay its debts than I have to ask you to pay mine." I represented to him Napoleon's invariable hostility to the trade and commerce of England, and endeavoured to show that the French wars were maintained for the protection of industry as well as of property. He asked me, with a bitter sneer, "How much worse the working classes would be off, if Napoleon had conquered the country, than they are now?" He then added, "The policy of Bonaparte, you say, was intended to destroy the trade and commerce of England; have not the corn-laws a direct and obvious tendency to produce the same result? You know they have, and so does everybody know who can put two ideas together. We cannot sell to people whose payments we refuse. So that, according to your account, we have spent hundreds of millions to prevent Bonaparte from doing that which, at the very moment of his fall, we set about doing ourselves. This is exceedingly like the story told of a man who paid his servant for saving him from an assassin on the very morning that he committed suicide."

A glance at the cases which I have quoted will sufficiently show that the operatives of Stockport have

not brought this misery upon themselves by any misconduct of their own. Neither can their distress be attributed to the manufacturers. There is an Arab proverb, that every man must eat a bushel of dirt in the course of his life; a Persian commentator adds that a certain portion of nonsense in the shape of vituperation must be annually spoken against every individual and class of society. The manufacturers have had to bear more than their fair proportion of such nonsense; for I have actually heard them accused of working short time and closing their mills in order to embarrass the government. Persons who have a desperate cause to defend will often employ forms of *un*reasoning worthy of a candidate for St. Luke's. Let any man calculate the amount of property vested in a mill, and the rapid destruction of that property which ensues when its work is suspended, and he will at once perceive that no manufacturer could afford to suspend his works, unless driven to such a course by the direst and most inevitable necessity.

Not one whit less nonsensical is the cry raised, that at least a portion of this distress is to be attributed to the invention of new processes for the abbreviation of human labour. In consequence of the very disadvantageous conditions imposed upon industry in this country, it is very evident that, without such processes, we could not compete with the foreign manufacturers at all, and the decrease of employment

for our operatives would have gone on at a more rapid rate even than it has during the last four years. The operatives know well that their condition was never so prosperous as when machinery was most fully in work, and they are not, thank God, likely to be duped by the implied suggestion of the orators who use these unreasonings: in South Lancashire and North Cheshire they will not be induced to destroy mills and print-works. They distinctly see that the source of their distress is the prevention of those who are anxious to be their customers from coming, with the means of payment, into the market; and if they ever express a wish for destruction, it does not extend beyond the locks, bolts, and bars which secure the bonding warehouses in Liverpool. To the removal of these their dearest hopes and fondest aspirations are directed. I am as persuaded as I am of my own existence, that the Anti-Corn-Law League at this moment alone preserves the public peace in the north of England. Were its members to suspend their operations, or to dissolve their body, declaring, "We have done all that we could do, and we now must abandon our efforts in sheer despair," there would instantly be a break-up of the body politic; society would resolve itself into its original elements, and no man could predict the consequences.

Over-production is the third specimen of non-argument which I have to notice. It was reserved for the economists of the present day to discover that a nation

can hold out too many incentives to industry, and impoverish itself by the creation of too much wealth. There is nobody, who is not in a hopeless state of what Lord Brougham calls *crass* ignorance, who is not aware that the opening of the bonding stores in Liverpool would be followed within a week by the emptying of every warehouse and store in which unsold goods are piled both in Manchester and Stockport, and that within a month every wheel and steam-engine now standing idle would be once more in active operation. The result would be as instantaneous as the beneficial consequences which followed on the repeal of our Orders in Council, when every horse-cart and other vehicle in Rochdale was engaged within an hour after the arrival of the intelligence, and long before the evening closed far advanced on the road to Liverpool, laden with goods for exportation. The obvious remedy for the distress of Stockport is not very far from the town: it lies in the docks of Liverpool, where, unfortunately, it has been kept too long.

Before concluding this letter, which has already run to a much greater length than I had anticipated, I wish to direct your Lordship's attention to two very important documents, which I shall quote without comment. The first forms part of a communication addressed to the Poor Law Commissioners by S. Forster, Esq., whom I have already mentioned as chairman of the Stockport Union. He says,—

"As you have attended two of our Board meetings, I need not be diffuse as to the manner and kind of our casual relief. You must have observed, I think, that a great many who apply to us are not the crouching idle vagabonds who would not work if they could help it, but clever, intelligent operatives and mechanics, who would never appear there if stern necessity had not driven them to it; not until their little savings, their good household furniture, nearly the whole of their clothing and bedding, had been sold or pawned, in hope of a change in the times. This hope has been deferred until their souls have sickened within them; and the complaints of their starving wives, and the crying of their hungry children, have driven them to the dreadful alternative of applying to the Board for some relief, or to allow their families to die from destitution. You have seen, when at our Board, sufficient to justify this statement. I have seen, in my official capacity, a tear stealing down the manly cheek, because he has been forced to seek relief where he had never expected to appear, and had to supplicate for a little bedding, when his own bed, which had cost pounds, had been sold for a few shillings on account of the urgency of his distress. I think you know that our Board does not deal to these with a niggard hand, considering the heavy calls upon us; yet what does our relief amount to? Not more than 1*s*. per head per week for each member of the family—to families such as these, who are most anxious to earn their

own bread by their own labour, and who have been accustomed to live plentifully.

"I have observed that the operatives have pawned or sold most of their bedding and clothing, and have little but what they have in immediate use. The men are certainly in a poor condition, but the women and children much worse. I shall avail myself of the knowledge I have derived from being a poor-law guardian, as well as what I have learned from others who have been actively engaged in relieving distress of this sort from private charity, which has been done to some extent, but in no way commensurate with the existing distress.

"With respect to men and boys, we find at the Board that they are very destitute of sufficient apparel. As yet we have not relieved them to much extent, except in cases where flannel has been required in consequence of infirmity; and also with the article of clogs, or wooden-bottomed shoes. The latter articles we have distributed in large numbers to both men, women, boys, and girls: and perhaps no one article of clothing could be a more sure index of poverty than this to a people who had been mostly very particular as to the shoes they wore, that they should be of a good quality, and of a handsome appearance. But dire necessity has removed this.

"The clothing of the women is very wretched, and by no means adequate to protect the body from disease. This we are frequently reminded of from some of our

medical officers, who have informed us that medicine would be unavailing without an increase of apparel. And, such is the destitution that prevails in this respect, I am informed by a lady who has visited the poorest classes of families, in order to afford some relief, that many women have no clothes but a chemise and wretched outer garment. They have no flannel petticoats, or anything to keep out the pinching cold of winter: therefore we have in many instances given flannel petticoats, chemises, and clogs; and to a few of the men shirts, in addition to clogs, and occasionally a jacket or pair of trousers. The prospect as to the future is truly appalling in this respect.

"But, perhaps, nothing can so forcibly portray the depth of the present misery as the great want of beds and bedding. This destitution is abundantly confirmed both by medical and relieving officers—by the testimony of such as have visited the dwellings of the poor who have applied to our Board for bedding, many of whom, we understand, have no bed; some a few flocks, or a little straw, spread in the corner of their room or cellar; no covering but a single sheet or rug. Many have to lie together, to the number of six, seven, eight, and more, of both sexes, indiscriminately huddled together in their clothes, covered by an old sack or rug; no sheets, blankets, or coverlids. In these cases we have a wretchedness that cannot have entered into the contemplation of most people—a degradation which cannot be thought seriously of, both

as to its moral and physical effects, without apprehension as to the consequences; and though it may be doubted by those who do not wish to believe such distress exists, it is nevertheless true—yea, and greater than this is also true: for we know that the infant has been brought into the world on the floor of one of these abodes of wretchedness, because there was not either bed, sheet, blanket, or bed-cover, and no provision had been made for the infant. This is a fact; and when it was communicated to our Board (which happened to be sitting at the time) we supplied the poor woman with the requisite necessaries and with food also, at the recommendation of our medical officer, who attended the woman as her accoucheur; and it is most probable that this case is not an isolated one. From hence you must infer that applications for beds and bedding are numerous and pressing. You know how we relieve them. I have availed myself of this topic to show you, by irrefragable proof, the greatness of our distress, and not to speak of the amount of relief given.

"We have, also, reason to believe some have died of destitution. Cases of this kind are kept as much as possible from the public view. Some have been mentioned which have attracted the notice of those connected with Government, at least the Poor Law Commissioners; but we believe more have taken place. I was informed of one case, that happened some time ago, of a poor woman who, according to

the doctor's statement, died of destitution. She was in a dying state when the doctor was called in: stimulants and restoratives were prescribed and applied without delay, yet she died in a very short time. It is probable that the relief afforded by the relief fund will have saved the lives of many who would have perished rather than have received parish relief. When this fund is exhausted (and that it must be in a few weeks) the consequences, I fear, will be awful. But in the state of our finances we shall have exceeding great difficulty to keep up our present relief, on account of the difficulty of obtaining the requisite funds from the overseers, several of our calls not having been paid without the assistance of the magistrates."

The last document I shall quote is a circular describing the distress in Stockport, which was prepared and issued at the beginning of this year by a committee consisting of the mayor, the rector, the clergy of all denominations, the aldermen, magistrates, and leading manufacturers of the town. I shall only add that, fearful as the statements which it contains are, matters have since become much worse.

"It is well known that the cotton manufacture of this kingdom has been long and greatly depressed, and that numbers of persons engaged in it have been thrown out of employment, and great distress occasioned in the various towns and districts of which it is the staple manufacture.

"The borough of Stockport, the working population of which is engaged almost exclusively in this manufacture, has suffered, in common with other towns, from its general and long-continued depression.

"The distress so occasioned has been increased to an extent, it is believed, beyond that of any other town, by special and peculiar circumstances of a local influence.

"We allude to the entire stoppage of some of the largest establishments in the town and neighbourhood, by which several thousand persons have been thrown out of employment, who still remain without any prospect of being able to return to it.

"Of the establishments at work, a great part are so only partially; and the working of short time (that is, of four days per week) has been continued to a greater or less extent since May last.

"Upwards of one-third of the horse-power in the town and neighbourhood is unemployed, which, if at work, would give employment to more than 4000 persons. It is believed that there are, altogether, about 5000 operatives of various trades unable to obtain employment.

"The consequences of this suspension of labour are extensive loss and suffering among all classes dependent upon trade, and unexampled distress and privation among the working population.

"This distress, heightened as it now is by the

severity of the weather, has arrived at a pitch of which it is impossible to convey any adequate idea by mere statistical information.

"The poor-rates have regularly increased, and are now become a serious drain upon the diminished resources of the comparatively few who are able to pay them.

"Families, two or three together, are crowding into one house, or leaving their cottages for cellars; some are quitting their native land; numbers, having exchanged all but the last articles of their wearing apparel for the means of sustaining life, are on the verge of destitution; honest men, willing to work, are compelled, with their entire families, to become street mendicants, or to live, day by day, on the precarious charity of their neighbours; and besides an increase of disease, arising in a great measure from a deficiency of food, many, it is to be feared, are literally starving to death.

"Of 15,823 individuals inhabiting 2965 houses, lately visited under the direction of a committee appointed for the purpose, 1204 only were found to be fully employed, 2866 partially employed, and 4148, able to work, were wholly without employment. The remainder, 7605 persons, were unable to work.

"The average weekly income of the above 15,823 persons was 1*s.* 4¼*d.* each.

"The average weekly wages of those fully employed were 7*s.* 6¼*d.* each.

"The average weekly wages of those partially employed, 4*s*. 7½*d*. each.

"The committee appointed for the purposes of the relief now to be afforded, being fully convinced that all the efforts that can possibly be made in the town and neighbourhood will be utterly inadequate to meet the pressing necessities of the case, have resolved, under the direction of the meeting by which they were appointed, to make an appeal to their countrymen generally, and especially to those individuals and classes of society who feel little of the pressure of the times, or who are removed from all fear of personal suffering and privation."

My Lord, the documents from which I have quoted in this letter have been before the Government and the country for several months in the authentic shape of a report presented by the Poor Law Commissioners, and printed by order of the House of Commons. During all this time no efficient means have been taken to relieve this fearful mass of unmerited suffering: it has been permitted to become darker, deeper, and more destructive. During all this time too the means of immediate and efficient relief have constantly existed within a few miles of the town, in the bonding warehouses of Liverpool. Ample granaries have been kept locked in the sight of a starving people, and that people has made no effort to burst the doors. Which are we most to admire, the cruel obstinacy on one

side, or the patient endurance on the other? One sometimes finds it hard to believe that this is the nineteenth century, and that the world has not retrograded to the dark ages of barbarism. However distant it may be in time, the remedy for the destitution of Stockport is not far removed in space—it lies at the mouth of their own river, in the docks of Liverpool.

LETTER XII.

Ashton-under-Line, ——, 1842.

To prevent any interruption to the statements I have to make respecting Manchester, I shall anticipate a little, and give an account of a brief visit to the important and interesting district which includes Duckinfield, Ashton, and Staley Bridge. My companions in this excursion were members of the British Association from various parts of the empire: our conversation turned on the topic which is now the only subject to be heard discussed in every company, the great and increasing distress of the times. One of the party expressed his fear that a repeal of the corn-laws would only superadd agricultural to manufacturing distress. That a free importation of corn and sugar would at once relieve manufacturing distress was easily demonstrated, for that measure, and that measure only, would open our ports to the only payment which our customers in North and South America have to offer. The rest of his argument was rather more difficult to comprehend, because one of the most perplexing things in the world is to discover what people mean by agricultural distress. On a very close

inquiry from him and from others, I find that the phrase can have no reference to the condition of the agricultural labourers, for they are physically in a worse state than the operatives; and their condition is every day becoming more intolerable, as is sufficiently proved by the increasing numbers who have recourse to mendicity. Assuredly agricultural distress can have no reference to such farmers as are tenants at will: so long as I can remember, this class of men has invariably been complaining of being over-rented, over-taxed, and over-tithed;—with more justice, they have complained that they had no inducement to make the land capable of raising a greater amount of produce, which by a prudent outlay it might easily be made to do, because they had no security for a fair return from the investment of their capitals, and no beneficial interest in their improvements. Annual tenures and short leases are, in fact, a penalty on the exertion of skill and industry; the tenants at the same instant work themselves into better harvests and higher rents. My Irish experience supplied me with too many instances of this penalty on labour, intelligence, and outlay having been very rigidly exacted, for me to have any doubts about this matter. It is clear, therefore, that Agricultural Distress is a cry which has no connection whatever with the labourers, and which has a very slight relation, if any, to the farmers. The only remaining class is that of the landlords, and that they are frightened for themselves is of course

undeniable. But it is far, very far, from being clear that their terror is reasonable: our compassion is due to those who are hurt, not to those who are frightened; and I entertain considerable doubts whether landlords would be at all hurt by the opening of the ports; assuredly, not so much as they are likely to be by the ruin which the continued closing of the ports is certain to bring upon the manufacturers. The mere throwing back upon the land the number of agricultural immigrants who have found employment in South Lancashire and North Cheshire would take a far larger sum from the pockets of the landlords than they can possibly lose by the importation of foreign corn: to which must also be added the sum necessary to maintain the increasing surplus population of agricultural labourers, against whom manufacturing distress of necessity closes the channel by which they were drained off into manufacturing employment. Without referring again to Mr. Ashworth's paper —which at the time of this conversation had not been read—showing that the value of *mere land* in Lancashire, without any exertion or expenditure on the part of the landlords themselves, has been increased from 1500 to 3000 per cent., solely by the establishment of manufactures, the very place which we were visiting was perhaps as signal an example of the benefits which landed proprietors, without any trouble or outlay on their part, derive from the skill and industry of manufacturers, as could be found in the

country. The principal landholder in this neighbourhood is the Earl of Stamford and Warrington,—from all that I have heard, a most equitable landlord and a very worthy man: now, there are parts of his property here the value of which has been raised ten, twenty, and even thirty fold, within a quarter of a century. Ground is now let on building leases at a high rent, which before the power-loom sought shelter in Staley Bridge would scarcely have brought a shilling per acre, for I am convinced that on some acres of it a goat would have starved: mines are wrought to supply the demand of coal in the immediate neighbourhood, which would never have been remuneratively worked to supply a distant market: water-power is rented, and thus a profit is derived from streams which under other circumstances would have entailed a considerable expense to keep them from doing mischief. I have not found anybody who envied Lord Stamford and Warrington these new sources of greatly enlarged rental; but if his Lordship happens to be a supporter of the corn-laws—I know not whether he is or not—his Lordship must be exceedingly envious of himself: he may "divide himself and go to buffets," putting one-half of his personality to represent his property in corn-lands, and the other half his property in building ground, mines, and water privileges. But I think that he would find the latter somewhat like the half of the American boy's bed: the young rogue, being asked to share his

bed with his brother, offered to do so on condition of being allowed to have his half in the middle, leaving his brother to make out the other half as well as he could at the two sides.

I cannot recollect whether it is to this or some other period that I must refer a note of a conversation with some of the members on the question of Free Trade, with particular relation to the conduct of the French ministry in raising the duties on linen yarns. One of the party insisted that we ought to retaliate and increase the impost on the importation of French wines. It so happened that this gentleman was as fond of a glass of good claret as I am myself—though that is not saying much; and I therefore asked him why it was right that we should be deprived of our favourite wine because Frenchmen had taken an absurd fancy to wearing ragged shirts? This gentleman was a very strenuous supporter of what are called treaties of reciprocity, and he dwelt very strongly on the unfortunate failure of the late commercial treaty which had been in process of negotiation with France. Now on this subject I had an anecdote to relate which I had heard from good authority: it was this,—that the English commissioners had not full powers to treat, but were directed to return home for fresh instructions as soon as they had obtained the consent of the French government to all their stipulations and demands. I have further heard, and I believe, that this consent was obtained; that M. Thiers actually

took up the pen in his hand, declaring that he was ready to sign if the English commissioners were prepared to do so; and that they had the mortification of being forced to confess that they could not sign the very treaty which they had negotiated themselves on their own chosen basis, without a further consultation with the authorities in England. From another source I have been informed that much of the hostility which M. Thiers has since then exhibited towards England and English interests arises in no small degree from the insincerity with which he appeared to be treated on that occasion. I do not relate this anecdote because I attribute any great importance to it: in a sound state of trade, treaties of reciprocity are worth just as much as they would bring if sold in the market for waste paper, and not one farthing more. The healthy commerce of nations depends on both parties having a clear perception of their mutual interests: if these interests are great and obvious, the bonds of union which they form will be very little if at all strengthened by innumerable yards of red tape and countless pieces of sealing-wax.

I had written thus far from my notes when two letters were put into my hand which have so direct a reference to the subject under discussion, that I must digress a little to notice them. The first is from a settler in the back states of North America to his brother-in-law, a respectable surgeon in London, fully confirming the statement already made in page 154,

that there exists at this very moment a profitable market for our manufactured goods, from which we are excluded only by the legal prohibitions which prevent us from taking the only payment that our customers have to offer. "I can raise," says the writer, "far more corn and pork than would be sufficient for our own consumption five times over, but I cannot get a market for the produce. In consequence, my clothes are patched and darned to such a degree that you would turn me from your door as a shabby beggar, and poor Joseph, like his namesake of old, wears a coat of many colours." Laying aside his account of some private and domestic affairs, which, of course, are not fairly open to publication, he describes very amusingly the perplexity to which the ladies of the family are reduced by this state of things. One has been obliged to wear her best silk dress in performing her domestic duties; another has been compelled to keep entirely within doors because she will not spoil her best dress in drudgery, and she cannot bear to be seen in the assortment of shreds and patches to which her other dresses are reduced. The writer is as much opposed to the American tariff imposing a duty on British manufactures as the Lancashire operative is to the laws which exclude American corn. Both are right; the pork and corn of the settler are sadly wanted at this moment in the vicinity of Staley Bridge, and the same locality would furnish materials sufficient to give Joseph a dress of uniform colour,

and to save Mary from the necessity of spoiling her Sunday gown.

The second letter is from one of the party on the excursion I have been describing. After some ridicule of what he is pleased to call my "passionate attachment to the men of Lancashire," which he attributes to the witchcraft for which the county was celebrated of old, he says, "I congratulate you on the appearance of a remedy which, no doubt, you have discovered may be worked out of Gladstone's measure for giving corn free to manufacture sea-biscuits. Let the people of Bolton, Stockport, &c., make a contract with the railway proprietors and captains of steamers; let them send their operatives to Liverpool, whisk them on board the boat, make half-an-hour's run out to sea, knock the heads off the bonded barrels, and have a hearty meal of ship-biscuits, which I assure you are very good things. To be sure the meal may be lost in rough weather, but, as you say that your friends in Lancashire have proud stomachs, tell them from me that it is much better for them to have strong ones. As to the impropriety of sending the operatives to sea, no objection need be made to it, for, to my certain knowledge, all those who have the power of legislating for them have been *at sea* these seven years."

Thanks to railroads on one side and digressions on the other, the account of our expedition has been much longer than the journey itself. So far as our

observations went, this district appears to have suffered less than any of the adjacent places. When I first visited Dukinfield in the year 1837 I was struck by the very superior condition of its working population, which was far above the average of that of Manchester and Salford, and I remarked, what was subsequently confirmed by a report of the Manchester Statistical Society, that the number of beer-shops and public-houses bore a very small proportion to the amount of the working population. This was also the case with Staley Bridge, which is the head-quarters of the power-loom; Dukinfield being principally occupied with bleach-works.

I am disposed to regard the present process of bleaching as one of the most signal triumphs of modern science. It is not necessary for me to describe the several steps of so complicated an operation; it is sufficient to say that it is wholly effected by chemical means. Previous to the discovery of the present process large quantities of British goods were sent to be bleached in the plains of Holland, and were, consequently, kept from six to nine months out of the market. Those which were bleached in crofts at home were exposed to countless accidents from the carelessness of the persons employed to take them up and lay them down; and the difficulty of guarding the crofts held out great temptations to pilferers and robbers. These were the days in which Burke declared, with equal truth and bitterness, that, though he could

never procure a grant of sixpence from the Government, he could always obtain a felony without benefit of clergy. Of course robbery in bleach-grounds was soon visited with a capital penalty, and I have heard eye-witnesses describe, with a horror which the lapse of years had not abated, the effect produced by the execution of a lad of sixteen who had been convicted of this offence, and who had been sent from the castle of Lancaster to suffer the extreme penalty of the law on the spot where the offence was committed. "The shrieks of that poor boy calling for his mother," said a gentleman narrating the incident, "will not cease to ring in my ears until the very latest hour of my existence."

The intrusting of fire-arms and other dangerous weapons to uneducated, and, therefore, imprudent watchmen, was another sad necessity imposed upon manufacturers by the old system of bleaching. A sad story connected with this circumstance was related to me in Dukinfield. For obvious reasons I suppress the name. A young man, the son of a bleacher, entered into the merchant-service, and was for five years employed in trading from port to port before the ship to which he belonged returned to Liverpool. He took the earliest opportunity of getting home to revisit his family; the stage brought him to Manchester, and, as the evening was fine and the distance not very great, he resolved to walk over to Dukinfield. Some companions met and delayed him; night

had fallen before he reached the grounds around his father's house. He took a short cut through the fields, which unfortunately led him through the bleaching-croft; the watchman's challenge was unheard or unheeded; the watchman, who had received special orders to be particularly vigilant on that night, fired his blunderbuss, and the young man fell, mortally wounded by a heavy charge of slugs. In this condition he was brought into the house and recognised by his unhappy family. He died before the morning. Now, my Lord, I have heard this story related by persons who doubted the beneficent and humane results of science and machinery.

Ashton has rather a singular aspect: it stands on the summit of a hill surrounded by rich levels, which must have been, and that at no very distant period, an extensive swamp. An old castle still beetles over a spur of the hill, which tradition declares to have been the residence of a Norman knight, Sir Ralph de Assheton, who was a truly formidable personage in the days when the Plantagenets had to issue proclamations supplicating "certain right honourable and right noble ladies" to abstain from "robbery on the high roads and piracy on the high seas." Sir Ralph paid as little attention to such admonition as any of his compeers: his fastness was inaccessible to the royal troops, for the secret of the passes through the marshes was only known to a faithful few, and strangers who attempted to find their way over the

treacherous quagmire without a guide had every reasonable chance of obtaining death and burial at the same instant. Countless tales have been told of this chieftain's prowess and cruelty; his memory still survives at Ashton, where his effigy is annually paraded, in a singular ceremony called "Riding the black lad," which terminates with the hanging of the knightly representative. It was proposed at the last anniversary to make the effigy of this aristocratic plunderer represent, in addition, the supporters of the corn-laws, but the design was abandoned, I believe, on account of the difficulty of finding appropriate emblems.

Ashton, some years ago, was the great metropolis of the followers of Johanna Southcote, who expected that this town was to become the New Jerusalem, as the Mormonites say that Nauvoo, in North America, is certain to be. Some of the Southcotians may still be seen in the town, distinguished by broad-leaved white hats, brown coats, and long beards: but their number has much diminished since the time of my former visit; most of the sect having been, as I have been informed, absorbed into the Mormonites, who are picking up the fragments of all the broken sects in the North of England. Like most of the fanatics who have pretended to special revelation, the Southcotian teachers, like Mohammed, had always messages from Heaven to sanction the impulses of their sensual desires. Many anecdotes were told me which

illustrated lamentably the arrogance of the pretensions of these false prophets, and the hopeless credulity of their dupes.

We were told that the proportion of children employed in the mills in this district is much larger in the ratio to the whole population than in any other part of Lancashire. This led us to discuss the subject of infant labour, a subject on which I have elsewhere promised to make some remarks, and I may as well take the opportunity of doing so here.

The question is not of so much importance as it was two years ago; mill-owners have been whitewashed with small-coal; and the wildest fictions of sufferings in the mills have been far surpassed by the actual facts brought to light in the mines. But there is no necessity for entering into any comparative estimate; I mean, in broad terms and in the plainest language, to assert that the infant labour, as it is erroneously called, or the juvenile labour, as it should be called, in factories, is in fact a national blessing, and absolutely necessary for the support of the manifold fiscal burthens which have been placed upon the industry of this country. It is quite sufficient to say that the children of the operatives have mouths, and must be fed; they have limbs, and must be clothed; they have minds, which ought to be instructed; and they have passions, which must be controlled. Now, if the parents are unable to provide these requisites—and their inability to do so is just as notorious as

their existence,—it becomes absolutely necessary that the children should aid in obtaining them for themselves. To abolish juvenile labour is plainly nothing else than to abolish juvenile means of support; and to confine it within very narrow limits is just to subtract a dinner or a supper from the unhappy objects of mistaken benevolence.

To talk of infant labour is sheer nonsense, and nothing else. What master would be insane enough to employ an infant or a child incapable of performing the task for which he pays wages? If mill-owners and capitalists were worse tyrants than Nero, still they would not be such fools as to throw away their money for the mere indulgence of sportive cruelty. There can be no question about the labour of infants, but there must be many questions about the labour of boys and girls, so long as operatives have families and feel the necessity of supporting them. That legislative protection should be extended to the children nobody means to deny; but the protection is wanting, not against their employers, but against the extremes to which griping poverty in most instances, and grasping avarice in some, may drive their parents.

It has pleased some people to portray the mill-owners as the living representatives of the ogres and giants of our nursery tales. They are simply men, not one whit better or worse than their neighbours; their chief characteristic is a very acute sense of their

own interests, and those interests forbid them to be tyrants. "Tread on a worm," says the old proverb, "and it will turn;" but tread on a Lancashire operative, or his children either, and you will find yourself more awkwardly situated than if you had provoked the hostility of all the worms in existence. The extremity is not likely to be tried by those who have millions of property at the mercy of a rusty nail or the ashes of a tobacco-pipe. Besides, if it were true that cruelties are practised on children in the mills, or that tasks are imposed upon them injurious to health or life, such a fact would only prove that the physical or moral destitution of the parents must be of the most frightful kind, or else they would never, for the sake of trifling wages, expose their offspring to such sufferings.

But we are gravely told that "juvenile labour, under all circumstances, is a grievance." I never believed the assertion. I am persuaded that my own fagging at school, under adverse facts of position, was more severe than any which I ever saw in mill or print-works. But let us grant juvenile labour to be a grievance, there is one still worse, and that is juvenile starvation. I have seen, with some pain, the little piecers and cleaners employed in their monotonous routine, when the sun was high in heaven, when the skies looked smilingly upon the earth, and earth answered with its own smile of loveliness and fertility; I thought how much more delightful would

have been the gambol of the free limbs on the hill-side, the inhaling of the fresh breeze, the sight of the green mead, with its spangles of buttercups and daisies, the song of the bird, and the humming of the bee. I could give as much sentimentality on the subject as would serve three generations of boarding-schools. But I have seen other sights: I have seen children perishing from sheer hunger in the mud-hovel, or in the ditch by the wayside, where a few sods and withered boughs had formed a hut, compared to which a wigwam were a palace. I have seen the juvenile mendicant, and the juvenile vagrant, with famine in their cheeks and despair in their hearts: I have seen the juvenile delinquent, his conscience seared by misery, his moral nature destroyed by suffering, his intellectual powers trained to perversity by the irresistible force of the circumstances that surrounded him. It is a sad confession to make, but, owing perhaps to some peculiar obliquity of intellect or hardness of heart, I would rather see boys and girls earning the means of support in the mill than starving by the roadside, shivering on the pavement, or even conveyed in an omnibus to Bridewell.

Juvenile labour is in fact a mere question of meat, drink, and clothing: if the sentimentalists who have raised an outcry against it, as a grievance, can show how the children are to be supported without their earnings in the factories, the operatives will gladly keep them at home and thank them into the bargain;

but if they have no better remedy to propose than sheer starvation, common sense will reject their interference as a mockery and an insult.

The question must also be regarded in another point of view: the operative has, as we have said, a very limited supply of domestic accommodations, and if his children were excluded from the mills it is not quite clear what would become of them. Their homes could not contain them, even if they were disposed to remain in them—their only resource would be the street with all its perils and all its temptations. Juvenile labour may be a very bad thing, but juvenile vagrancy and juvenile delinquency are infinitely worse. The children will not starve if they can help it, and if food is not to be procured by work they must either beg or steal.

The tasks which children are employed to perform in the factories are not laborious; they are, however, for the most part monotonous and fatiguing, and the regulations which ensure to them proper portions of time for recreation and instruction are certainly necessary for the preservation of their physical health, and also for the maintenance of that mental and moral power which depends more upon the bodily constitution than is generally known; but it is my duty to declare that the children in the mill are better off than nine-tenths of the same class throughout England. The mill is a better place than the mine, the ship, the forge, and very many private workshops.

I have conversed with several young piecers and tenters who have tried both, and found that they invariably preferred the mill to the farm or the field; and as I have lived long enough in the country to appreciate the value of Arcadian pictures of rural life, we were not astonished at their choice. It is true that husbandry affords many occupations more healthful than factory-labour, but it also has some that are worse; and moreover, the employment it affords is not steady, and when there is no work the comforts which work purchases must likewise disappear.

Some of the operatives, and many people of much higher pretensions, object to juvenile labour because they believe that it diminishes the demand for the labour of full-grown people. They imagine that if the boys and girls were withdrawn from the mills there would necessarily be an increased demand for men and women, that employment would be more abundant, and that wages would consequently rise. This opinion has at least the semblance of plausibility, and therefore merits a little consideration. I trust, however, to show that it is erroneous in all its parts, and that the system of juvenile labour is actually beneficial to the operatives taken as a class. The three elements for which an employer pays are time, skill, and strength; the labourer who only exerts the skill and strength of a child will, in the long run, even leaving out of view the competition of foreign nations, obtain only the wages of a child, because he has nothing on

which to rely for maintaining his value in the market. Were the manufacturers compelled to dismiss the children, they would not supply their places with trained and skilled workmen, because the training and skill would be worthless, but they would import an abundant supply of untrained labourers from Wales, from Scotland, and from Ireland, to whom the wages of the children, small as they are, would be a desirable object. Many of these would in time begin to compete with the superior operatives, they would draw them down faster than they would raise themselves up, and the rate of wages would sink rapidly below its present level. The example of the hand-loom weavers should teach the spinners the danger of a trade being inundated by operatives who require little or no preparatory training to make a commencement. It is their good fortune that the employments in the mill, which require but little skill, also demand but little strength, for it has saved them from being reduced to the level of agricultural labourers by the appearance of untrained hordes mingling in their ranks.

I have dwelt at some length on this subject, because when first I visited the manufacturing districts I was as strongly prejudiced against the factory system, and particularly against juvenile labour, as any person alive. Facts triumphed over my opinions, but still truth wore its way slowly, for the prejudices were deeply rooted and had been long cherished. It

was, however, impossible to avoid discovering that factory-labour supplied the children with food, clothing, shelter, and protection, and it was equally impossible to discover how they could procure these requisites without the factory.

Everybody has laughed at the French princess, who, hearing that the poor had an insufficiency of bread, proposed to feed them with plum-cake; but her proposition was absolute wisdom when compared with the schemes broached by the humanity-mongers of the present day. They tell us to abolish juvenile labour; they reflect not that labour brings wages, and that wages bring bread; their charity is starvation, their humanity a sentence of extermination. Compared with them, Herod was the very model of a merciful governor—for a massacre of innocents was benignant policy, compared with a system of starving an entire generation into misery, and guilt, and death. How glorious is the philanthropy which closes the mill in order to throw open the workhouse, the prison, and the grave!

It is offensive to fine sensibilities that children should work in factories, but is it equally offensive to such delicate feelings that these children should be in existence? There they are, and fed they must be. The mode is to be settled, not with the manufacturer, but with the father and mother. I should gladly see some of our precious philanthropists setting about it. Suppose one of these humanity-mongers going into

the cottage or lodging of a working family, and gravely proposing that the boys and girls should be prevented from going to the mill for the future. The father declares that already their united wages are barely sufficient for decent support, and that, in the present state of trade, a reduction of wages is far more probable than a rise. If he could procure food at a cheaper rate, if taxation did not indirectly sweep away more than half of his earnings, if the closing of foreign markets against the goods he produces did not at once limit the supply of employment and increase the number of those seeking it, he might be able to afford his children more leisure for instruction and amusement;—but to propose as a remedy for a poor man's sufferings the increase of his outgoings, accompanied by the diminution of his incomings, is sheer mockery and insult on the part of a man in his senses, and worse than the drivellings of idiotcy when proposed by anybody else.

Juvenile labour is a family question: it is easy for those who abandon their own domestic duties to whirl through the giddy rounds of dissipation to forget that the poor have families. They can think of the child without including the consideration of the parent, for, in their own case, they can think of the parent without the child. But, in any question connected with the operative family, the parent and the child cannot be dissevered. Whatever is evil and wrong in the condition of the children has arisen from

previous evil and wrong in the condition of the parents. Evil, indeed, is the necessity that children of tender years should be tasked beyond their strength, to procure subsistence; but still more evil is the imposition of those burthens on industry which, require such inordinate labour for procuring a scanty supply of food. Wrong it is, that the parent should consign his boy or girl to cramping confinement, or else see them starve before his eyes; but still more wrong is the legal robbery that tears away half the fruits of his own toil, and throws him upon the energies of his tender offspring to make good the deficiency.

Charles V. went into mourning when the Pope was imprisoned by his own soldiers, and offered public prayers for the Pontiff's deliverance, which he could have effected in a moment by issuing an order. The imperial hypocrite has had a host of imitators: there is no man, not wilfully blind or hopelessly stupid, who does not know that juvenile labour is a necessary and inevitable result of the great and inordinate pressure on the general industry of the country. Is it not then the wildest insolence of hypocrisy to lament the result, and, at the same time, uphold the system by which it is produced? When such inconsistency is ostentatiously displayed, the only doubt is whether it should be despised as folly, or detested as wickedness.

Inspection by government agents has been recently

established; and though it is obviously a system open to objection, inasmuch as all legislative interference in the details of trade is bad in principle, it has on the whole worked well. Still there is room to fear that, as the mills improve, the inspection may become vexatious; it is a very common error for persons in authority to suppose that they can regulate the processes of manufacture better than the manufacturers themselves, and nowhere is this tendency to intermeddling legislation greater than in England. Hence there is reason to fear that inspectors may fall into the error of exacting literal obedience to arbitrary rules, even when exceptional cases arise where a breach of the rules would best carry out the principles for which a system of superintendence was instituted. Most people have heard the story of a factory inspector who, having found a boy hidden in a sack, recommended the government to introduce a clause into the act of parliament against the heinous crime of hiding children in sacks.

I know very well, and so does your Lordship, the risk which I run in making these observations;—there are certain and not at all uncommon dispositions for which a pet scheme in which a little benevolence spiced into a very hot curry by a disproportionate admixture of mischief has exceeding attractions. A scheme of education, for instance, which would unite with the instruction of a very few scholars an ostentatious insult to three-fourths of the Irish

people, would in Dublin produce deafening cheers in the Rotunda, and a day of public thanksgiving in Hatch Street. There is little need to remind you of the obloquy which you have incurred because you have effected a far greater quantity of good than those very philanthropic people intended, and, furthermore, deprived them of that spice of mischief which is necessary for the recommendation of benevolent actions to the goodnature of some very excellent people. But the outcry against infant labour was worse than the outcry against your national schools: the emissaries or volunteers who acted as spies for the Bishop of Exeter were bound by his celebrated letter of instructions to visit the schools, though under the very Christian restriction of reporting nothing good which they found in them. But those who raised the noisy cry about infant labour neither visited the factories personally nor by proxy; and their Coryphæus, Lord Ashley, obstinately refused to do so, when every opportunity, means, and facility of inquiry were offered him by one of the most eminent manufacturers in Lancashire. "He visit a cotton-mill!—not he truly! He wondered how such a thing could be proposed to him!"—A greater wonder is that he did not discover himself to be virtually asserting that the best qualification for legislating on any subject is utter ignorance of the entire matter.

Now I do not mean to assert—far from it—that Lord Ashley has not done much good by his factory

legislation: a sincere and thoroughly honest man could scarcely fail of doing so by exertions to which he gave his whole heart, even when he acted on the suggestions of the leaders of "sticks," strikes, and trades unions. But I do say that his Lordship is in the whimsical position of having wrought good which he never contemplated, and of having missed inflicting the evils which he was induced by others to design. The attention to education which he forced upon mill-owners has rendered the general movement in favour of education throughout the country irresistible: it has also placed the cotton-manufacturing population rather ahead of their countrymen in intellectual and moral power, and has rescued them from being the dupes of the Doghertys and such like, by whom his Lordship's movements were originally prompted.

I might with all safety allow the question to rest here; but I go further, and state that, if a system of juvenile employment did not exist, it should have been the business of the nation to create it. "*Non meus hic sermo*,"—it was the declaration of Mr. Pitt in the early part of the session of 1792, in a speech pointing out the new resources which might be opened to the country, when some of his adversaries took what he considered rather too gloomy a view of financial affairs. If education is, as it ought to be, a system of training for the duties in which men are to be engaged in active life, then those who are to live by labour should early be trained to labour. The interference of government

is required only to prevent the apportionment of that labour passing beyond the bounds of physical endurance.

On the whole I think that the country is greatly indebted to Lord Ashley; aided by the cry of the old Cotton Spinners' Union on one hand, who trusted that the limitation of juvenile labour would compel the masters to submit to the rate of wages which they pleased to dictate, and aided on the other hand by the cry of those who felt annoyed that the increasing importance of the lords of cotton enabled them to press very hard in the race of fortune upon the lords of corn, he has succeeded in obtaining parliamentary interference for the relief of the most infinitesimally small of the grievous conditions to which the labour both of young and old is subjected in this country. He has since then laid his hand upon a grievance of far greater magnitude and intensity; he has fought the battle for its redress boldly, manfully, and fairly; and whether he fails or succeeds, he will be the author of a great public benefit. He will either redress the wrong or he will expose to the contempt of Europe and of posterity those pseudo-philanthropists who were exceedingly willing to be *generous* at the expense of the cotton-manufacturers, but who are just as unwilling to be *just* in a far more atrocious case, which happens to touch their own pockets, or the interests of those from whom they expect either personal or political favours.

An outcry was raised against factories to counteract the growing cry for the repeal of the corn-laws. To some extent the shouters against the factory system succeeded, having given the most remarkable instance, within my memory, of what Lord Melbourne well described as "the awful force of falsehood." But where is that cry now? Some of the very loudest in ringing it are silent as the grave, with the awkward recollection that they had forgotten the proverb which forbids those who dwell in glass houses to begin throwing stones, and that, after having wearied heaven and earth with a clamour against a very minor grievance,—if indeed it could be called a grievance at all,—they are now induced by their interests to defend a social evil of the greatest magnitude that was ever yet exposed to an astonished and indignant public.

The original Report of the Inquiry into Factories lies before me, side-by-side with the Report on Mines. The factory commissioners actually reported that the conditions of factory labour were as favourable as could well be desired, but nevertheless factory legislation advanced at railway speed; the cry against the cruelty of manufacturers became louder after its utter falsehood and absurdity had been demonstrated in reports to Parliament; nay, there are people at the present day who repeat the tale of punishment with a billy-roller, which everybody who knows anything

of manufacturing processes is aware has no existence, and can have no existence, in a cotton-mill.

There is nothing new under the sun! Some two centuries ago it pleased the sages in the rest of England to get up a farce of extraordinary commiseration for the unfortunate people of Lancashire: it was spread abroad that the Devil had taken adverse possession of the Palatine Duchy, to the prejudice of the rights of Queen Elizabeth, and that he had organized a staff of wizards and witches, who inflicted the most fearful sufferings on all that refused allegiance to his Satanic Majesty. All the soft hearts in England were moved; pocket handkerchiefs, that might have served for sails to a man of war, were saturated with tears; and sighs were heaved of sufficient strength to blow those sails across the Atlantic. The usurer locked up the plunder of widows and orphans, and had not time to hear their starving cries, because he was going to pray for the relief of the bewitched; the magistrate ordered the shivering vagrant to the whipping-post, while he shed tears for those who vomited pins and needles in Pendleton; the buccaneer relieved his reminiscences of murder by anxious cares for those whose butter was prevented from churning, or whose milk was whisked away, by the spells of demons. All persons of good and easy circumstances buttoned their pockets against the misery by which they were surrounded, but poured out, not merely a

flood, but a deluge of cheap pity on the suffering population of Lancashire. Beggars were starved, wretches were flogged, trade went down, food went up, the misery of the community increased with accelerated velocity, but every cry of distress was drowned by the one unmeaning cry against the witches of Lancashire.

Common sense, sooner or later, regains its ascendency: after large sums had been spent in special commissions, ropes, and tar-barrels,—after some scores of innocent people had been hanged, burned, or drowned,—and after some pretty pickings, in the shape of forfeitures, had been divided among the ravens, parrots, and magpies, as a reward for their expenditure of words,—it pleased the government to inquire whether the asserted witchcraft had any existence, and, this being soon decided in the negative, the whole delusion was at an end, and the quack philanthropists of the day had to seek some other vent for their superabundant stores of mock benevolence.

The logic of a popular cry is truly admirable: it passes sentence on a conclusion after having adjourned all consideration of the premises, and draws inference from inference with rhetorical speed, totally regardless of such a trifling consideration as the preliminary establishment of the fact. But the effect of such logic is not to be measured by its absurdity: had the results of the Factory Bill been confined to providing a few comfortable appointments for some

very respectable gentlemen, people might be content to laugh at it; but it was employed with considerable effect to prevent the great body of the nation from being affected by the cries of suffering from fiscal regulations which were just beginning to be heard from the manufacturing districts, and strangely enough the pretended wrongs endured by the young were made an excuse for inflicting actual starvation on the old.

During the course of my life I have had to contend against two cries equally nonsensical, and, for a time, equally influential,—mutilation of children and mutilation of the Scriptures. The latter is, indeed, dead and buried. 'The Dublin Christian Examiner,' the loudest in raising the cry, has had the grace to turn round upon its followers, and not only laugh them in the face as fools and dupes, but also scold them in good set terms for perversely maintaining the opposition which it had itself preached as the most essential duty of all genuine Christians. We are just about to receive an equally edifying display on the subject of infant labour: you will find that some who were the loudest in canting will now be the foremost in recanting, and we shall see the proved abominations of mines treated with a leniency refused to the disproved aberrations of factories.

All honour be to Lord Ashley! If he succeeds with his Bill he will put a check to the sacrifice of health, morals, and life, which has been going on to an enor-

mous extent beneath the surface of the earth; and if he fails, he will still have thoroughly exposed the baseness of that pseudo-philanthropy which endeavours to pervert the best feelings of the heart to the basest of political purposes.

LETTER XIII.

Manchester, ——, 1842.

THE attention of the public has been much directed to the state of crime in this town, especially since the publication of Mr. Neale's able pamphlet on Juvenile Delinquency in Manchester. Through the kindness of Sir Charles Shaw I have obtained very accurate statistical details on this subject, part of which I shall lay before your Lordship in a tabular form, before I make any comment or observation on them. The first is a TABLE showing the DEGREE OF INSTRUCTION, AGE, AND SEX of the PERSONS taken into CUSTODY, SUMMARILY CONVICTED OR HELD TO BAIL, and TRIED AND CONVICTED, in the year 1841.

Of the magnitude of the offences in the third class some notion may be formed from their sentences:— 1 was transported for life; 21 for 15 years; 8 for 14 years; 37 for 10 years; 83 for 7 years: 5 were imprisoned for 2 years; 61 for periods between 1 and 2 years; 160 for periods between 6 and 12 months;

		TOTAL IN THE YEAR 1841.			DEGREE OF INSTRUCTION.							
					1. Neither Read nor Write.		2. Read only or Read & Write imperfectly.		3. Read and Write well.		4. Superior Instruction.	
		M. & F.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male	Fem.
1st Class	Taken into Custody . . .	13345	9925	3120	4901	2070	3944	1218	873	119	207	13
2nd Class	Summarily Convicted or held to Bail	2138	1661	477	795	265	660	198	193	14	13	..
3rd Class	Tried and Convicted . . .	24	645	179	277	100	276	72	82	7	10	..

	AGES.															
	Under 10 Years of Age		10 Years, and under 15.		15 Years, and under 20.		20 Years, and under 25.		25 Years, and under 30.		30 Years, and under 40.		40 Years, and under 50.		50 Years, and under 60.		60 Years and upwards.	
	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	Male.	Fem.	ale.	Fem.
1st Class	62	6	681	83	1581	656	2425	909	1805	755	1775	582	1018	284	422	85	156	60
2nd Class	4	..	151	17	302	84	418	150	264	93	327	75	129	39	49	14	17	5
3rd Class	..	..	30	2	150	54	196	61	97	21	109	25	43	11	15	3	5	2

430 for periods between 1 and 6 months; 16 for less than a month: 2 were fined and discharged.

This Table sets forth in a very striking form the moral influence of education; for all practical purposes the first and second tables, showing the degree of instruction, must be taken together, those in the second column being virtually as uneducated as those in the first: thus viewed, we find that about eleven-twelfths of the crime in Manchester is committed by those who have not been subjected to the restraining influence of instruction, while only in one-twelfth of the delinquencies has this restraining power been proved to be inefficient.

The second Table is one to which I am very anxious that public attention should be directed, in the hope that similar returns may be obtained from other districts, as they would throw much light on the state and causes of crime in England, valuable not only to the statistician, but to the legislator.

MISCELLANEOUS STATISTICS

FOR THE YEAR 1841.

Number of Pawnbrokers in the Borough of Manchester	129
— Beer Houses in the Borough of Manchester	769
— Public Houses ditto ditto	498
— Brothels	309

Number of Brothels suppressed since the Establishment of the Police 111
— Brothels where Prostitutes are kept . . 163
— Houses of Ill Fame where Prostitutes resort . 223
— Prostitutes (Street-walkers) in the Borough of Manchester 768
— Thieves known to reside in ditto (who do nothing but steal) 212
— Persons following some Legal Occupation, but who are known to have committed Felony, and augment their gains by habitual or occasional violation of the Law 160
— Houses for the Reception of Stolen Property in the Borough of Manchester 63
Ditto suppressed since the Establishment of the Police 32
— Houses for the Resort of Thieves in the Borough of Manchester 103
— Ditto suppressed since the Establishment of the Police 25
— *Lodging Houses where the Sexes indiscriminately Sleep together 109
— *Mendicant Lodging Houses in the Borough of Manchester 91
— Warehouses and Houses found Open by the Police in 1841 713
— Lost Children found by the Police and restored to their Parents 2730
— Persons arriving in Manchester weekly by Railway, about 35,700
— Ditto by Coaches 3661
— Fires in the Borough of Manchester where Engines were employed 39
— Fires extinguished by the Police without Engines 24
— Lives saved by the Police ditto . . 23

	£.	s.	d.
Amount of Property destroyed by Fire .	31,280	0	0
— Recovered or Saved from Fire .	126,788	0	0
— Stolen in the Borough of Manchester	10,011	18	11
— Recovered . . .	2,899	19	2
— Taken from Drunken Persons when in Custody, and restored to them when sober . . .	21,426	4	7

Population comprised within an area of 66 square miles, forming a circle around Manchester, the most distant part of which is not more than five miles from the Exchange, 354,142.

No. of Public and Beer Houses reported and summoned.	No. of Informations laid.	No. of Acquittals.	No. of Convictions.	Amount of Penalty.
				£. s. d.
Disorderly Public Houses	233	6	227	173 17 6
,, Beer Houses	229	8	221	74 15 0
	462	14	448	248 12 6

A place where about 40,000 persons arrive by various conveyances every week must have its tables both of criminality and mortality much swelled by such an influx of strangers. Numbers of them probably are the tenants of the low lodging-houses (marked with a * in the table), where there can be no doubt that crimes and profligacy of every description are both planned and perpetrated. In the line

following the lodging-houses is a return which I think very disgraceful to Manchester. It has been justly said that opportunity very often makes the thief; and those who offer such temptation by their culpable negligence, should be made to bear some share of the punishment. To the influx of strangers must probably be attributed the very large proportion of public-houses and beer-houses reported as disorderly.

The third document to which I shall direct your attention is an abstract of a paper read by Sir Charles Shaw to the Statistical Section of the British Association, entitled "A Report of the Cases brought before the Police of Manchester on Saturdays and Sundays," (which he described as the great days of crime in this part of the country,) from the 22nd of January to the 15th of June, 1842. The number apprehended was 646, consisting of 440 males and 206 females. Of these, 320 had been out of employment an average of eight months and twenty-five days previous to their apprehension. He had been told, when he came to Manchester, that the whole of the crime was committed by the Irish, but he was sceptical on the point, for the best and most orderly soldiers he had commanded were the Irish. The table justified his doubts; for out of the 646, only 172 belonged to the sister kingdom. With regard to the influence of particular employments in disposing men to intemperance, it appeared that those engaged in laborious employments, such as sawyers, smiths, carpenters,

and porters, were much less addicted to intemperance than tailors and others engaged in sedentary occupations. It was gratifying to state that there were only 17 factory operatives in the whole number of persons apprehended.

This testimony to the comparative morality of the factory operatives is particularly valuable, because the contrary has been asserted in public and private, with a pertinacity only to be equalled by the utter groundlessness of the charge. In like manner, the charge of illicit indulgences and of intrigues between the factory girls and their superiors appeared, upon inquiry, to be confined to a few cases, not proportionately greater than what is found to take place in other employments. This result of inquiries might, and indeed ought, to have been anticipated, if people took the trouble to reflect that opportunity is necessary to the commission of crime. Mr. Tufnell made particular inquiries on this point, and he declares that "the whole current of testimony goes to prove that the charges made against cotton-factories on the ground of immorality are calumnies."

Profligacy in the masters or overlookers of a mill may, perhaps must, lead to great immorality in those under them, but capitalists soon discover that licentiousness is injurious to their interests: they are practically taught that the morality of their operatives is an essential element of their working value, and those who do not learn this lesson must soon find their

way into the Gazette. The chief cause of immorality in Manchester is not the aggregation in the factories, but the want of domestic accommodation when the mills are closed. I obtained a singular confirmation of this fact from one of the most respectable cotton-spinners in Lancashire; he kept a list of all the intrigues detected in his very large establishment, and in nine instances out of ten the seducers did not belong to the same mill as the seduced.

A writer on the factory question heads one of his sections, "On the general ugliness of the manufacturing population."—This is a mere question of taste: prejudice would not discern a particle of beauty in Venus herself, and it might therefore equally blind a spectator of the brides that present themselves at the collegiate church of Manchester. Factory labour does not indeed improve the form or the complexion, but it is less injurious to either than many of the ordinary employments of females,—far less so than the trade of the milliner, the embroiderer, and the straw-plaiter. Lancashire has its fair proportion of beautiful women, and the factories have not yet abated its ancient fame for the witchery of female charms.

On the subject of the health of factory operatives a very important paper was brought before the Statistical Section by Mr. Alderman Shuttleworth, relating to the spinners of fine cotton, who, on account of their being exposed to a very high temperature, have been

generally represented as exposed to circumstances very unfavourable to vitality. How far this belief is grounded will be seen from the following report:—

"'On the Vital Statistics of the Spinners and Piecers employed in the fine-spinning mills of Manchester.'—The tables which," said Mr. Shuttleworth, "I have to present to the Section, relate to the nineteen cotton-mills in Manchester which are engaged in spinning fine numbers of yarn. These are the whole of the establishments in this town so employed. As such mills require to be kept at a higher temperature than is necessary in spinning common numbers, it has been generally considered that the health of the workpeople engaged in them was exposed to more injury than in any other kind of factory labour. In consequence of this prevailing opinion, and as the conditions under which the fine-spinners are placed are certainly somewhat peculiar, it was thought desirable, when the Factory Commission was appointed in 1833, to collect a body of information which should be confined exclusively to them as a separate and distinct class of spinners. The parties concerned in the inquiry, anxious to have the facts collected under such circumstances as to entitle the statement of them to every confidence, requested me, as a person wholly unconnected with the spinning business, and having no interested feeling in the result of the investigation, to undertake the responsibility of con-

ducting it. I accordingly drew up a series of questions, to be answered personally and individually by each operative spinner, to agents, consisting of professional accountants, and one of our most respectable and intelligent surgeons, who were employed to go through the mills and receive the answers from the workmen. That the answers might be given considerately and after due preparation, every spinner was furnished with a list of the questions a day or two before the agents visited them to receive their replies. The facts and statements, thus most carefully and scrupulously collected, were then arranged by me under the heads exhibited in the tables, and afterwards delivered in evidence before the Factory Commissioners sitting in Manchester at the time, and their accuracy verified on oath by myself and the agents employed. It happened, however, that the documents were not forwarded to London till the commissioners sitting there had decided on closing the inquiry, and these tables, therefore, were not included in the report of the commission. As the information they contain is entitled to the fullest reliance, and has not hitherto been published, I have been requested to offer it to this Section, as a contribution which may possess some interest and importance in vital statistics. The nineteen mills in question worked sixty-nine hours per week; they employed 837 spinners who are adults, of whom—

16	are under	21	years of age.
176	from	21 to 25	inclusive.
198		26	30
155		31	35
152		36	40
89		41	45
33		46	50
12		51	55
5		56	60
1	above		60
837;			

and these *spinners* employed 3233 boys and girls as *piecers*. The tables contained the number of spinners in each mill classed into ages, the years they had worked in cotton-mills, &c., health, &c. The general results are as follows :—There are 837 spinners, whose united ages are 27,367 years, making an average of 32 years for each spinner. They have worked in cotton-mills 19,133 years, which is equal to 22 years and 10 months for each. Of the total number, 255, or nearly 30½ per cent., were absent from work on account of sickness in the year 1832 an aggregate of 6296½ days, or an average of 24½ days for each of the 255 who were sick, or 7½ days for the whole number of spinners employed. Of the 837 spinners, 621, or 74 per cent., reported themselves to enjoy '*good*,' 171, or 24 per cent., to enjoy '*pretty good*,' and 45,

or about 2 per cent., to have '*indifferent health.*' The 837 spinners employed 3233 boys and girls as piecers, or something less than an average of four piecers to each spinner. Of these piecers, 488, or 12 per cent., were relations of the spinners. 707, or rather more than 84 per cent., of the spinners wer married. The united ages of the wives when ma ried were 15,376½ years, equal to 21 years for each. The number of years of the marriages was 7907 years and 5 months, equal to 11 years and 2 months for each marriage. In this period, 26 of the wives, or rather more than 3½ per cent., were dead, and 681, or nearly 96½ per cent., were living. Of the living, 422, or 62 per cent., were reported to enjoy '*good,*' 151, or 22¼ per cent., '*pretty good,*' and 108, or 15¾ per cent., to have '*indifferent health.*' The married spinners had had 3166 children, equal to 4½ to each marriage. Of these children, 1922, or 60½ per cent. of the whole, were alive, and 1244, or 39½ per cent., were dead. Of the children alive 1225, and of those who were dead 1221, making 2446, or 77¼ per cent., had never been occupied in any kind of work; 640, or about 22 per cent. of the whole, had worked in cotton-mills; and 58, or nearly 1½ per cent., had worked at other employments. Out of the 640 who had worked in mills, 18, or about 2¾ per cent., were dead; and out of the 58 who had worked at other employments, 4, or nearly 7 per cent., were dead. The cases of distortion were 8, or 1¼ per cent., and there

were 7 cases, or rather more than 1 per cent., of mutilations from machinery."

A discussion followed, in the course of which the following facts were elicited :—That the small number of fine-spinners above 60 years of age arose from two causes,—first, the recent introduction of that branch of industry; and, second, the fact that it was an employment requiring great sharpness of sight, so that workmen were generally obliged to abandon it for some other pursuit when they grew old; that the health of the operatives in country mills was far above the average in town mills; and that the high rate of mortality in Manchester was owing to the want of drainage, ventilation, &c., and not to the factory system. Mr. E. Chadwick stated that at the village of Catrine, in Ayrshire, it had been ascertained that the annual rate of mortality was only 1 in 54, and that in the mills of Deanston the health of the operatives was far superior to that of the surrounding rural population. Statistical inquiries on this subject had been recently made in Austria with the most satisfactory results; the average sickness among the operatives was found to be only 3½ days per annum, which is not quite one-half of the average sickness in Mr. Shuttleworth's tables.

Connected with this subject, I shall also insert an abstract of a paper read by Dr. Noble "'On the Influence of the Factory System in the Development of Pulmonary Consumption.' He compared the pre-

valence of consumption in the manufacturing town of Manchester with its amount in other places where there is little or no manufacture. According to the census of 1831, there were 49,932 families resident in Manchester and Salford; the entire registered deaths in 1839 were 9223, and the cases of consumption 1454, that is, 1 death from consumption out of every 34 families, and 3 from consumption in every 19 deaths from all causes. In agricultural Essex, with a population of 62,403 families, the deaths from consumption in 1839 were 1201, and the total number of deaths 6352; being, in the agricultural district, 4 in every 21, and in the factory district but as 3 in 19. In the district embracing Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and the southern divisions of Lincolnshire, comprising a population of 67,351 families, the deaths from all causes were 7306, and those from consumption 1308, or nearly 1 death in every 5. Thus the general mortality was lower in the agricultural districts, but the proportion of consumptive cases to deaths was greater. In Liverpool, out of 43,026 families, the deaths for 1839 were 9181, and the deaths from consumption 1742. Thus in Liverpool there are 2 deaths from consumption out of every 49 families, and in Manchester only 2 out of every 68. In Birmingham the condition was more favourable, being nearly 1 death from consumption out of every 36 families. In London the rate is 2 deaths from consumption out of every 105 families, and the pro-

portion of consumptive cases to deaths from every cause exactly the same as Manchester, or 3 out of 19. With the exception of the metropolis, Manchester has fewer consumptive cases in proportion to the number of deaths from every cause than any of the districts above mentioned; and hence Mr. Noble inferred that factory labour has no direct tendency to produce consumptive disease. Taking the register of deaths for three years in the township of Manchester between the ages of fifteen and forty, the following results were obtained: 174 consumptive deaths were of persons employed in factories, 590 of persons registered in various occupations, and 377 without any stated employment. Of the factory operatives 45 were spinners, 49 winders, 28 piecers, 15 reelers, 11 carders and frame-tenders each, and 10 stated generally to be employed in factories. The general conclusion from these and similar facts was, that factories have no special influence in producing scrofulous disease, or its peculiar manifestation, consumption.

"Dr. Alison of Edinburgh, in a few brief remarks, confirmed generally the accuracy of Mr. Noble's views."

The 'Report on the Vital Statistics of Manchester,' presented to our Section by a Committee of the Manchester Statistical Society, did not throw so much light on the vital influence of different trades and professions as I could desire; for as there was no estimate of the per centage of the persons engaged in the

different employments, it was not possible to determine the comparative rates of mortality. The documents, however, laid before our Section during the meeting of the British Association sufficiently refute the idle tales respecting the deplorable morality and mortality of the factory operatives, and thus tend in the strongest degree to confirm my deductions from a very different series of observations, namely, that the great total of crime, disease, and death in Manchester is largely swelled by the incessant tide of immigration which, in spite of even its present distress, is constantly setting towards that town.

I cannot conclude this letter without noticing the advantages produced by the visits of the British Association in directing attention to the collection of local statistics. The papers which I have quoted, together with that of Mr. Henry Ashworth to which I have referred before, contain a mass of valuable and interesting information which could not easily have been procured in any other shape, and they will certainly enhance the value, as they confirm the accuracy, of my hasty notes.

LETTER XIV.

THE meeting of the British Association at Manchester has been one of the most brilliant and effective which that body has yet held. There was less of display than at Dublin or Newcastle, but there was not less of real enjoyment; and, from all I can learn, a greater amount of real business has been done. You are aware that I am so fondly attached to the Statistical Section that I never have attended any other since I became a member of the Association; and my former letter will have shown you the nature of the discussions "in my parish." The *soirées* were the best managed we have yet had: the apartments of the Athenæum and Royal Institution were thrown into one continuous suite by the erection of a temporary wooden communication; and thus, though there were nearly two thousand persons assembled, there was neither crushing nor inconvenience. In one of the rooms was displayed a very interesting series of tapestry-hangings, worked from the cartoons of Raphael; in another were exhibited the richest of the varied productions of the Lancashire loom; and

near them were the specimens of Atkinson's Irish poplins, showing that, at least in one branch of manufacture, Ireland still holds a high place for richness of material, beauty of design, and ingenuity of execution. Mr. Atkinson has been for several years a regular contributor to the exhibitions of the Association; and each successive display tends more and more to excite wonder at the richness and variety of his patterns. I greatly wish that it were possible to obtain an accurate statistical account of the whole and mixed silk-trade in Dublin for the next meeting of the British Association; and as I know that your Lordship takes some interest in the subject, I hereby offer to put the returns into order, if you will tell me to whom I am to apply for materials. I did once make an effort, but what I got in reply was the materials for a waistcoat, which, however well it looked upon my person, would cut rather an awkward figure in a statistical paper.

I did not join the excursion to the Worsley coal-mines; I have had one subterranean voyage to the Dudley lime-quarries, and that will suffice me for life, especially after the entry which the matter-of-fact keeper of one of the locks made in his books, where, after the entry "Canal-boat, Mary of West Bromwich; weight —— tons; cargo, pigs,"—comes, "Canal-boat, Bessy of Dudley; weight —— tons; cargo, philosophers." I forget the exact weight in

both cases, but I remember that the philosophers beat the pigs by long odds.

Our two great evening *réunions* were held in the Quakers' Meeting-house, an immense building, having accommodation for close upon three thousand people. At the first, our president, Lord Francis Egerton, delivered a very eloquent address, which was every way worthy a man of letters addressing men of science. At the second meeting the chair was taken, in the absence of the President, by the Dean of Manchester. He ably vindicated scientific researches from the charge of producing a tendency to infidelity,—a charge which, of course, originated among those theologians who choose to invest their own stupid guesses with the authority of revelation, and set their own interpretations of the Bible far above the sacred text. I used to think *Ego et Rex meus* as high a specimen of presumption as could well be quoted; but I so often hear *Ego et Deus meus* implied as strongly as if it had been directly stated, that I am inclined to pass over the regal favourite's phrase, as not inconsistent with the limits of modesty. It was a gratifying sight to see sitting together on the same bench three of the greatest living astronomers, Professor Bessel, Sir John Herschel, and our own Sir William Hamilton. Even more delightful was the appearance of the venerable Dalton among his scientific compeers, each vying with the other who would exhibit most respect

for the patriarch of chemistry. The speeches of the evening had less eulogy and mutual laudation in them than is usual on these occasions, and were all the better for the omission. There was a large attendance of ladies present, and, to their honour be it spoken, they were far better listeners than I have seen them anywhere else.

But though the gentlemen of Manchester kept their anxieties tolerably well concealed from their visitors in the public meetings, a very different state of feeling was manifested when they were visited in their warehouses and counting-houses. Even a fortnight had made an immense difference; men whom I had known the most strenuous advocates of Conservative principles were now foremost in urging resolutions and addresses to stop the supplies; those who were moderate Liberals have become advocates of the five points of the Charter; and many were ready to join in an association for the non-payment of taxes: in short, a very angry and dangerous spirit was increasing, and this in a class which had been always remarkable for prudence and moderation. The shopkeepers were not less excited;—the collector of the income-tax in Manchester will have a situation as little enviable as that of an inspector of mines under Lord Ashley's new bill. I found, too, that the apostles of mischief and sedition were not idle at a crisis so favourable to their schemes; indeed, they openly declared that their detestable project of an

appeal to arms, and the consequent result of a total change in the constitution of the country, were now close at hand. In the midst of this threatening and distressing aspect of affairs, I seem to myself to see the prospect of some good arising. I think that many will learn the lesson of the very little importance of the constitution of government,—considered as it relates to parties and persons rather than to principles.

"The disease of party," says Dr. Channing, "has spread everywhere. Yet it does not dishearten me; for I see that it admits of mitigation, if not of cure. I trust that these lectures, and other sources of intellectual enjoyment now opening to the public, will abate the fever of political excitement, by giving better occupation to the mind. Much, too, may be hoped from the growing self-respect of the people, which will make them shrink indignantly from the disgrace of being used as blinded partisans and unreflecting tools. Much also is to be hoped from the discovery, which must sooner or later be made, that the importance of government is enormously overrated, that it does not deserve all this stir, that there are vastly more effectual means of human happiness. Political institutions are to be less and less deified, and to shrink into a narrow space; and, just in proportion as a wiser estimate of government prevails, the present phrensy of political excitement will be discovered and put to shame."

Without adopting to its full extent Ralph's aphorism that "Whigs and Tories are the two thieves between which this nation has been crucified," I am not at all sorry that the leading politicians of Manchester are "looking more to things and less to men." There is a proof of it, which I very much lament, but which nevertheless I am bound to record, that, with the majority of the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League, the most unpopular man at the present moment is Lord John Russell. I have endeavoured to ascertain the cause, because I am far from being pleased with the fact, and I have only received vague and indeterminate answers. Still the fact may be quoted as a proof that there is a growing tendency among the manufacturers to look to themselves as a body, and not to rest their dependence upon any party in the state.

Now this is the feeling which the manufacturers of the North of England have always wanted. The East India interest is an organized body; the West India interest has an individual existence; the shipping interest, the Canadian timber-trade, and countless other divisions and subdivisions of industrial and commercial pursuits in this country, have individuality, cohesion, and association: but until the Anti-Corn-Law-League was formed, and until the pressure of the times had driven men of every sect, creed, and party into its membership, the manufacturing interest of the North of England, surpassing in national though

ot in political importance all those which I have named put together, has had neither form, substance, nor cohesion.

If I were asked where are the monuments of arts, sciences, and literature, produced under the patronage of the German burgomasters, or the Italian merchants of the middle ages, or the old traffickers of Languedoc, I have only to go into my library to find an account of them. But what art have the northern manufacturers fostered as a body,—what science have they developed —what literature have they created or even fostered?

Let me not be misunderstood; individually I believe that no men alive have done more for the patronage of art, science, and literature, than the northern manufacturers, and particularly the men of Manchester. I speak pretty feelingly on this subject, because I know that the depression of manufactures is always followed by a most depressing effect upon literature, and that Lancashire is generally considered "in the trade" as the most book-buying county in England. But how is the nation or anybody else to know of this individual patronage, when this individuality is lost and sunk in what appears to be a dread of being recognised by individual position? The manufacturers act as if they were ashamed of themselves and their order, and sought to hide the disgrace of their existence under some more fashionable name. So long as they do so, they must be content

to see themselves destitute of influence, for the world will not respect a class which sets the example of showing disrespect for itself. People cannot "stand by their order" who have previously shown that, so far as they are concerned, they do not recognise the order as having anything like a social existence.

The northern manufacturers form neither a class, an order, nor any distinct or distinguishable body in the country, and they have only themselves to blame for their anomalous position. They have chosen t fritter away their power, and to no small extent their respectability, by cutting themselves into sections, enlisted under the banners of various political leaders, unconnected with the manufactures, and for the most part very ignorant of all manufacturing concerns. I would be an easy though a very ungracious task to point out parliamentary representatives of some of the most important of the manufacturing districts, whose knowledge of the economics of trade and the principles of commerce could only be stated in negative quantities,—for, if not less than nothing, they are certainly worse than nothing; in order to set them right, they would have just as much to unlearn as unquestionably they have to learn. This state of things could no possibly have existed had the northern manufacturers been associated together for the protection and advancement of their mutual interests; if they had been formed into an organic body thirty years ago, corn-laws would not have existed, and, if their organiza-

tion had been complete a few years ago, corn-laws would ere now have been repealed. Look at what the League has already effected from the simple fact of its being founded on commercial and not on political principles. I see engaged in it what I always am anxious to see engaged in the promotion of any national and beneficent project—men of every religious denomination and every political sect; in all the exertions which have been made, principle has been steadily kept in view irrespective of persons or parties. The Leaguers have had the wisdom not to obscure their cause by the shadow of a mighty name.—

> "What should be in that Cæsar?
> Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
> Write them together,—yours is as fair a name;
> Sound them,—it doth become the mouth as well;
> Weigh them,—it is as heavy; conjure with them,—
> Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Cæsar."

The last of these experiments has been tried; Brutus, or the manufacturing interest, has evoked a more powerful spirit through the country than could have been found to obey all the Cæsars of all the political parties which have existed within my memory. This is an example of which the northern manufacturers must not lose sight; if they do, they assuredly will display little wisdom, or rather they will exhibit great positive folly. Incomplete as the organization of the League has been, and must necessarily have been, as it was only called into existence

by temporary causes, it has given a most signal proof of the great influence which the manufacturing interest can exercise when it appeals to the nation in its own strength and its own individuality. It has shown that men can do much when "they stand by their order," and that they are powerless and feeble when they stand by any other.

While on this subject I cannot forbear directing attention to one result of the want of individuality and organization in the manufacturing interest, which I have always regarded as very little short of a national calamity—I mean the almost total want of the means for a mercantile and commercial education in this country.

The various endowed schools throughout England were originally instituted, not merely to train a certain number of pupils, but also to keep up the standard of general information throughout the country. The founders deduced their standard from the clerical profession; because, in their day, the clergy formed the only class which held a high rank in the scale of intelligence. It was natural that they should limit their attention to the only form of learning existing in their day, and it is not surprising that they did not anticipate the social changes which rendered the acquisition of other and more varied information not only desirable, but absolutely necessary.

During the last half-century a silent but important change has been wrought in the educational wants of

the community, and various efforts have been made to accommodate the scholastic systems of our ancestors to the new circumstances of the present, and the new prospects of the rising generation. Schools being established to train the mind for the employments that must engage its faculties in maturity, it is sufficiently obvious that any great revolution in the business of active life, any larger and more varied demand on the intellectual powers, must call for a wider extension of the cycle of school instruction, and a change in the system of preparatory training, proportioned to the change in the objects on which the trained mind will have to be exercised. It is an aphorism nearly as old as man himself, that the acquirements of youth should, as much as possible, correspond with the requirements of life. The revolution which has taken place in the active business of life may be described in one sentence. Trade and commerce have become professions; nay, more,—they have become professions requiring a range of information as wide, a tact in application as ready, and a discretion in choice as acute, as any of the professions which have been hitherto exclusively called "The Learned."

In every branch of industry the head that plans becomes daily of more importance than the hand that executes: mental power is far more in demand than physical force or manual dexterity: the tradesman's interests extend far beyond his shop; the pro-

cesses of art must be referred to the principles of science, and not received from vague traditions or casual experiments. Scientific knowledge has ceased to be a luxury, it has become a necessary of life: every man who enters into business finds large demands for it at his very first step; and it is therefore obviously indispensable that he should possess the supply necessary to meet such a requisition.

I should be very much puzzled if I were asked to point out a dozen schools in the country where youth could obtain instruction in those branches of knowledge which are the best calculated to train them for a life of commerce and active business. In plain terms, the manufacturing youth of the higher and middle classes are not trained for the order to which they must eventually belong, but for an order to which there are few chances of their ever attaining, but after which there is all but a perfect certainty that they will render themselves miserable by aspiring. This defect is sufficiently notorious, and one consequence of it has passed into a proverb, that "There is but one generation in Lancashire between clog and clog." If manufacturers cannot be induced to associate themselves into a distinct order for their own sake, they ought certainly to do so for the sake of their children; and above all things they should assert the dignity of the commercial character by a public recognition of the extent of information necessary for the commercial profession.

It is strange to see such a powerful interest as that of the northern manufacturers of England exhibiting, from the mere want of unity and combination, all the helplessness and feebleness of infancy, tottering about for support from one side to the other; now resting on this party, now leaning on that; shouting for one name to-day, and huzzaing for another to-morrow; without discovering that it is far better able to stand by itself than any one of the interests to which it has recourse for support. One of the greatest blessings which the League will have conferred on the community—not second in importance to the repeal of the corn-laws themselves—is, that it will show to themselves the strength of the manufacturers when their order stands alone, asserting the individuality, the importance, and I do not hesitate to add the nobility, of its existence.

Every thing which I have seen in my recent tour confirms the great and overwhelming importance of this associating and combining spirit which the League has developed amongst the manufacturers of Yorkshire and Lancashire. Still more obvious are the evils which have arisen from the long period during which the necessity of establishing some principle of union was neglected or forgotten. I have already said that the interests of the employers and the employed are identical, and that perfect confidence must necessarily spring up when this identity is clearly perceived. It is not less certain that injurious suspicions will arise

when this identity of interest is ostentatiously thrust out of sight by one side or the other. Manufacturers, ashamed of their order, were still more likely to be ashamed of the relations which their position established between them and the order immediately below them. They virtually abandoned their position, and thus threw all the existing relations into confusion. The operatives, thus abandoned by their natural guides, were left free to follow any leaders that offered, —Unionists, Chartists, and political adventurers of every grade and description. Up to the commencement of the anti-corn-law agitation, there was a dangerous and increasing chasm between the employers and the employed. The League has bridged it over; by getting the masters to recognise and hold firm to their own order and position, it has brought the men to get a clear view of the relations which connected them with that position. The previous disruption was perilous, and might have been fatal, but it would be grossly unjust to throw all the blame of the breach upon the operatives.

The beneficial influence of the League, in thus reconciling the capitalists with those by whom capital is and must be worked, has not escaped the notice of the apostles of mischief and sedition; there are no more bitter impugners of anti-corn-law agitation than the advocates of physical force; they are perfectly furious against the League on account of its success in wresting the elements of insurrection out

of their hands. Of course they have repeated all the sophistries and fallacies used in higher quarters;—there has been indeed a very strange free trade in non-arguments between the two extremes of the political world which have combined to support monopoly. But one would suppose that the Chartists find that they have to deal with the more intelligent people, for I perceive that they have begun to abate in the use of the fallacies, and that they have recently taken to prophecy instead of argument. They now predict that the capitalists will consign the operatives to their former state of isolation so soon as their ends are gained by the repeal of the corn-laws. I have as little belief in the truth of the prophecy as I have of respect for the character of the prophets. I have heard most of the leaders of the League express in the strongest terms their gratitude for the zealous support which they have received from the working classes during this contest, mingled with expressions of regret that there should exist any plausible pretext for a section of the operatives holding aloof during the conflict.

The meeting of the British Association for the Promotion of Science in Manchester has effected nearly as much good by directing attention to the subjects excluded from its deliberations as by the important topics which it actually discussed. Just before the Association assembled, many of the local papers expressed a hope that so large a body of learned and intelligent

men, collected not merely from every part of Great Britain, but from most of the civilized countries in the world, would not close its meetings without paying some attention to the distress which surrounded them, and endeavouring to suggest a remedy. The writers of these paragraphs did not know then what they know now—that the consideration of such subjects is peremptorily and necessarily excluded from the deliberations of that scientific body. But though disappointed on this occasion, it is not likely that the advantages of having such a subject discussed by a different assembly of equally intelligent men will be allowed to sink quietly into oblivion. A remarkable instance to the contrary has already occurred: when the Association met at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, it was proposed to superadd an Agricultural Section to the other working divisions of the body. The inconveniences of such a proposal were obvious; but though abandoned in form, it was more than preserved in spirit; for, instead of a section, the great Agricultural Association was instituted, the annual meetings of which fully rival in interest those of the parent institution. Now, I have no doubt that a Manufacturing Association would be not less useful or less interesting than either. There is, however, this difference: a Manufacturing Association would require a more permanent and practical organization; it could not subsist with merely annual meetings,—it

would require to have fixed executive and deliberative councils.

I have dwelt at some length on the present and probable benefits derived and derivable from the League, because I wish to show the importance of preserving such an organized body, even after its present functions have been fulfilled. It has taught the manufacturers to feel themselves "an order," and one too of the highest importance in the State; this has given them a strength, and, what is even more, a consciousness of strength, too valuable to themselves, and too beneficial to all dependent on them, to be lightly thrown aside.

The increasing harmony between the employers and the employed must be fostered and encouraged by every possible means. I know very well how much the actual organization of industry, which assembles hundreds of persons within the walls of one establishment, must tend to render the master and the operatives strangers to each other; but I also know how very important it is that the contrary should be the case. But it is gratifying to add that large capitalists are almost invariably attentive to the improvement of their workmen, careful of their health, watchful over their morals, and anxious to see them save portions of their earnings, so as to make some provision for their old age and for their families. In general, I believe that Villerme's remark

will be found correct—" Those who embark in business with small capitals, and fear every new rival, are almost the only persons who are ever found indifferent to the necessity of giving good habits to their workmen." " I have often expressed my indignation," he elsewhere says, " against the petty manufacturer, who has only emerged yesterday from the operative class, and who, to-day, speculates on the improvidence, the weakness, and the vices of his former fellow-workmen, embraces every futile pretext to make reductions of their wages, and desires that their misconduct may prevent any of them from rising above their present rank to that of paltry manufacturers, and consequently to that of his equals and rivals." I am not aware that any persons of this class are now to be found in Manchester; if any were there formerly, they must have been swept away in the early flood of the present commercial crisis.

It is impossible, indeed, to overrate the importance of a wise and benevolent capitalist: in his position, the best wisdom is benevolence, and the truest benevolence is wisdom. I have visited many localities in which the creation of a large industrial establishment has become the prolific source, not merely of physical prosperity to the country, but of moral advancement to the community; and in all cases the moral improvement was almost exclusively due to the influence of the chief of the establishment. I could easily cite several remarkable and decisive examples of this truth;

but it might be supposed that such instances were exceptional, whereas the rule of conduct has been general ever since I became acquainted with the manufacturing districts, and is now more so than ever.

I have given proofs that the immorality of Manchester is not the immorality of the factory system, but the depravity belonging to a large town with an immigrant and fluctuating population. On the other hand, the morality of manufacturing villages, such as Turton, Egerton, Hyde, Hollymount, and many others, is clearly the morality of the factory system, as none but persons connected with factories reside in these localities. Finally, I must repeat that the present distress has afforded the highest and most indisputable evidence of the great moral power which the factory system has produced: it is a power displayed in the most noble of all possible forms—heroic endurance of unmerited sufferings. There never yet was a population in this world, which fell from the state I remember to the state I now see, that would not long since have been goaded by the joint influence of memory and misery to absolute madness. What is now most to be deprecated and dreaded is, that their exemplary patience may not be quoted as a reason, or at least as an excuse, for continuing their wrongs. If once an intimation be given that virtue, instead of being its own reward, is to be its own punishment, it would be far from pleasing to dwell upon the consequences.

A gentleman in Manchester suggested that a very amusing work might be made by collecting the various arguments which have been used against the repeal of the Corn Laws, and classifying them, as illustrations of the sophisms. The only difficulty is, that it would be necessary to extend Aristotle's classification very considerably, or rather to place by its side an entirely new class of fallacies. A sophism is defined to be "an argument which, under the appearance of truth, deceives;" but what are we to call "arguments having no semblance of truth, which are intended to deceive?" Take the following example:—It is said—whether truly or falsely I need not stop to inquire—that some improvement in trade has taken place from the alleviation of the restrictions on the importation of food produced by the new tariff. What, then, is the inference? People of ordinary capacity would imagine that, when the efficacy of a remedy had been proved by its affording partial relief, the dose would be repeated in order to effect a complete cure. No such thing. It seems that certain state-doctors, like certain quack-doctors, are afraid of nothing so much as too speedy a restoration of the patient. The medicine acts too well, and therefore the use of it must be discontinued. A future age will inquire whether this is fancy or fact. Unfortunately the present generation is too well aware of the fact, and may very well inform posterity that

it is one of those sad realities which far surpasses the speculative flights of fancy.

Your Lordship is aware that Le Clerc found it necessary to add a new class to Aristotle's enumeration of the sophisms, which he calls the "*Argumentum Theologicum ab Invidiâ ductum.*" It would be very surprising if we wanted specimens of this sophism on the present occasion. It would be easy to find many which would rival if not surpass those which Le Clerc has taken from St. Jerome's celebrated diatribe against Vigilantius. A pious barrister, whose name I have forgotten, led the way by announcing that the Devil was the first corn-law repealer, when he said, "Command that these stones be made bread." The ingenious gentleman forgot that, to make out the parallel, it would have been necessary for him to prove that the stones had been bread before; and he further forgot that, if his argument had any validity, it would irresistibly follow that the miracle of the loaves and fishes had been wrought in obedience to the instigations of Satan. I am not disposed to imitate what I think a very dangerous example, the introduction of isolated texts of Scripture into political discussions; but I entreat that unknown gentleman, if he should ever cast a glance at these pages, to take into his consideration one brief text from Isaiah—"The Lord will enter into judgment with the Ancients of his people and the Princes thereof; for ye have eaten up

the vineyard, *the spoil of the poor is in your houses.* What mean ye, that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the face of the poor?"

But the worthy barrister has been far surpassed by the Rev. Henry Melville, who has proclaimed from the pulpit the astounding discovery that the extension of manufactures is in some way or other a contravention of the moral purposes of Providence in the government of this world. Here is *Ego et Deus meus* with a vengeance. The reasons for this extraordinary declaration, so far as any reasons can be discovered in the crowd of words with which it has pleased the orator to cloud his meaning, are the increased demoralization of a population when it is collected into a limited locality, and the greater difficulty of attending to the spiritual wants of a large flock than a small one. Obviously insufficient as these reasons are to bear out the monstrous assertion which has been based upon them, it is worth while examining them and seeing how far they are in accordance with fact. Now, is it at all a proved fact that a rural population is more virtuous, moral, and orderly than a town population? I know that such a notion is a very general prejudice—a remnant of the old infidel fallacy, started as a novelty, though it is as old as the hills, by Rousseau in the last century, that the life of the savage is more natural, and therefore more virtuous, than that of the civilised man.* But our con-

* See 'Natural History of Society,' vol. i.

cern is with the facts; those which best illustrate the subject have been collected in the Constabulary Report, and they certainly give the balance of morality to the towns. Judicial returns and police reports mislead inaccurate reasoners, for these documents are to be regarded not merely as comparative estimates of crime, but as comparative estimates of vigilance of police. Suppose that there was a locality—and I happen to know one—so thoroughly demoralised that crime excited no notice or attention, and where guilt was protected by a tacit but almost universal association of the inhabitants; its criminal returns would present a perfect blank, but no one who knows the place would thence infer that it was the most moral within the seas of Britain.

But we are further to consider how much of the immorality of dense masses of population is to be attributed to manufactures. In the name of common sense, what would they be without the manufactures? I have shown from authentic documents in the preceding letter that a very small portion indeed of the delinquency of Manchester can be traced to the factory population, and I am disposed to place more reliance on the statistical report of Sir Charles Shaw, who is well acquainted with the matter, than on the statement of Mr. Melville, who knows nothing about it. But I can go much farther; I can show by indisputable facts that factories have a decidedly moral influence. Take the examples of Hyde, Turton,

Hollymount, and other manufacturing villages, where the annual proportion of crime is considerably less than one in a thousand. I have a high respect for Mr. Melville, and I do not believe that, when he hazarded his incautious assertion, he was aware of the unjust imputation which his words implied against the manufacturing population. But he did not the less malign the operatives because he did so unintentionally, and he has not the less made it a duty imposed upon me, to state, as the result of much laborious inquiry and very patient examination of evidence, that, in soundness of moral principle and propriety of moral conduct, the operatives of the Lancashire factories fully equal the average of any other class or order in the British empire. It is a consummation devoutly to be wished that those who turn the pulpit into a chair of political economy should first endeavour to make themselves acquainted with the elements of the science and the facts of its statistics.

There is much truth in Mr. Melville's second reason: the magnitude of the factory population has outgrown the powers of the machinery at the disposal of the Church of England. But is it not obviously wiser to extend and increase that machinery than to set about a crusade against factories, which is as foolish, to say the least of it, as Don Quixote's crusade against windmills? It is a very dangerous thing for an orator to allow his rhetoric to run away with his logic and with himself also; in the present

instance unbridled rhetoric has carried the rider into calumnies which he probably never meant, and which, whether he did or not, are wholly unmerited by the class he has assailed.

Let me add that these are not the times in which it is the most prudent thing in the world—apart from all considerations of propriety or justice—for persons who speak with authority to use reviling, contemptuous, or opprobrious language to the operatives of Lancashire. They have borne much; but there is a Hindoo proverb which says that "The shaft of contempt will pierce through the back of the tortoise," and the skin of the operative is not quite so thick as the shell of that very respectable animal. Perhaps it would be well if certain pulpits would exhibit less of political economy and more of Christian charity,—that charity which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, *is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*"

LETTER XV.

London, July, 1842.

WHILE writing up my notes, and suffering at the same time under severe indisposition, I have received your Lordship's letter announcing the death of the great and good Bishop of Meath. "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" A greater loss could scarcely have befallen our common church and our common country. His whole life was spent in advancing "Glory to God in the Highest," by the means which the herald angels pronounced, by promoting "peace upon earth, good will towards men." The rule of conduct from which he never deviated was to seek noble ends by noble means; in public and in private his career was the best commentary on his Master's precept, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves," which I ever knew. The blow has stunned me; but "Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of Saints!" "Thy will be done!"

Before starting on my late tour I promised that venerated prelate to send him some observations on the religious condition of the manufacturing population, with particular reference to the means and appliances by which the Church is enabled to act upon its aggregated masses, and also with reference to the greater proportion of Dissenters in the north than in the south of England. On the latter point I have already remarked that, in my opinion, something must be attributed to diversity of race. The pure Saxons appear to have stronger elements of enthusiasm and independence in their composition than the mixed races of the southern counties. To use a phrase of another traveller who went over part of the same ground nearly at the same time as myself, "there is a spice of the wild man in the foresters of Rosendale and Pendle." Drayton, in his 'Polyolbion,' notices the spirit of the dances of Lancashire:—

"Ye lusty lasses, then, in Lancashire that dwell,
For beauty that are said to bear away the bell,
Your country's hornpipe ye so mincingly that tread,
As ye the egg-pie love, and apple-cherry red;
In all your mirthful songs and merry-meetings tell
That Irwell every way the Ribble doth excel."

He further mentions that the Palatine county was remarkable for a noble breed of buck-hounds, and still more for its excellent archers, whose bows had ensured the triumph of the red rose over the white. An anonymous writer in Elizabeth's reign describes Lancashire as "a stronghold of popery and puritan-

ism," and the latter was manifested in the great excitement produced by the case of the witches in Pendle Forest. During the civil wars the Lancastrians on both sides were distinguished for the zeal and energy they threw into their enthusiasm, and, in our own days, the fever of political excitement has nowhere risen to higher heat than in the principal towns of this county.

A spirit which is at once so excitable and so sturdy seems to have a natural tendency to emancipate itself from fixed forms; at least, it would require very delicate management to keep it within the pale of an establishment. Dissent once begun could not easily be checked, for the Lancastrians are equally obstinate and sincere; the latter quality being proved by the largeness of their contributions to various religious institutions and charities.

The number of the clergy of the Established Church in the manufacturing district is inadequate to the duties which the clerical body is bound to perform. Personal acquaintance with the members of each congregation, domestic visitation, and moral superintendence, have become physically impossible. There is another difficulty; the Lancashire dialect has a larger infusion of the genuine old Saxon than our ordinary language, and clergymen, in consequence of their classical education, are necessarily inclined to use a great number of Latinized phrases and forms, which are not familiar, and therefore not easily intel-

ligible, to their congregation. Furthermore, in every industrial branch employing large numbers, such as the cotton-manufacture, there arises a *gergo*, or language of convention, which those who are anxious to obtain influence over them must acquire. Hence it almost inevitably happens that a preacher, as is commonly said, "shoots over the heads of his congregation;" they listen to his sermon as an act of religious duty, but, for all the improvement of head or heart they derive from it, they might as well have listened to "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." "Understandest thou what thou readest?" is a question which should often be put to students of Scripture; but "Understandest thou what thou hearest?" is just as necessary a question to many frequenters of churches.

The late Dr. Arnold proposed to establish a kind of lay ministry, which would place at the disposal of the minister of every parish a staff of assistants not very dissimilar to the elders and deacons of the Scottish Church, or the class of local preachers and class-leaders among the Methodists, who might, under his superintendence, lecture, catechize, and convey religious instruction without administering religious ordinances. I do not know whether it was intended to combine with these duties the administration of charitable funds, as was the case in the order of deacons as originally constituted in the early Christian church, and as is the case in "the Ministry for the Poor"

extensively established in America and partially in this country; but such a union is very desirable: a man is more ready to believe in the purity of an anxiety to improve the state of his soul, when a desire is previously shown to relieve the wants of his body. Christ's lessons of faith were usually accompanied by miracles of mercy.

But, with or without this addition, sure I am that, without some such institution, any scheme of church extension will be a loss of time, labour, and money. The clergyman cannot get at the people; there is no community of taste, habit, or language between the parties; he cannot understand them, and they cannot understand him; and hence, when they come in contact, they too often part in mutual vexation. An interpreting medium is wanting, and, unless there are insuperable difficulties in the way, it ought to be supplied.

I have been asked by some persons of high authority whether I anticipate any difficulties in the establishment of such an institution. Candour requires me to say that I do, and that some of them are of no small magnitude. Ours is pre-eminently a partisan age; no plan for the improvement of society can be proposed that is not viewed by all parties in its relation to politics, with little or no respect to its intrinsic merits. On the other hand, it has become exceedingly difficult for any man, or any class of men, to hold an independent position; if they do not enlist

under the banners of party, the world, with great generosity, takes the trouble of enrolment upon itself, and imposes upon people all the responsibilities of party without the trouble of asking their consent. In this manner the clerical body has become partisan, and it must be prepared to encounter the increasing difficulties of such a position. Nowhere would these difficulties be felt more severely, or displayed more injuriously, than in an attempt to establish lay ministration at the present moment. If the subdeacons, as for the sake of clearness I may be permitted to call the supposed officers, are to be paid for their services, it would be difficult to determine in whose hands the patronage should be placed, and, wherever placed, the exercise of it would be very invidious. Supposing them to be unpaid, there remains no security for the proper exercise of their functions, and, besides, it would be said, "These men would not work for nothing without a motive." I must add that it is quite a mistake to suppose that the exercise of patronage, even in unpaid charitable offices, is not invidious; I have had three or four experiences on the subject when on the committee of direction of Sunday-schools, and I know rather more than I wish of the bickerings and jealousies of unpaid teachers.

I fear that the overcoming of these difficulties would require greater prudence, moderation, discretion, and forbearance in all the parties concerned, than could under present circumstances be reasonably expected;

but, at the same time, I am more than ever convinced that some such institution has become absolutely necessary—I do not say to the existence of the church as an establishment, but to the proper performance of those duties for which a church is established. It is scarcely necessary for me to say a word about home-missions; the principle on which they are founded is too obviously irreconcilable with the system of parochial government and episcopal superintendence on which the English hierarchy is based to allow of their being sanctioned. To borrow an illustration from the places I have recently visited, the only change proposed is an extension of the machinery, not a pulling down of the building.

I turn now to a more gratifying communication: I think, and indeed I have very good reason to believe, that the progress of Socialism and infidelity has been effectually checked in the manufacturing districts. The pressure of affliction has induced many who were previously negligent of religion to "turn unto the Lord their God," as a Being who has declared himself "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and who repenteth him of the evil." In the houses of the needy and the afflicted I have often found the Bible the last piece of furniture remaining; I have heard the miserable proclaim the patience they had learned from its precepts and the consolation they had derived from its promises. If

any man doubted the benefits which Christianity has conferred upon mankind, he would be cured of his scepticism by witnessing its soothing influence on the distress and suffering of Lancashire.

It is now time to bring this protracted correspondence to a close. I have endeavoured to vindicate a noble race of men, the operatives of Lancashire, from undeserved calumnies, and to excite sympathy for their unmerited sufferings. It was not my intention to have said one word about the remedy, but it was before me everywhere, as glaring and as obvious as the disease. Ask the operative why he has no food? He answers, the manufacturer will give him no employment.—Ask the manufacturer why he gives no employment? He answers, the merchant will not purchase his goods.—Ask the merchant why he does not purchase the goods? He answers, the laws prohibit him from importing the means of payment.—There is no getting out of this cycle, unless people make up their minds to the annihilation of British manufactures and the extermination of the British manufacturing population. I have endeavoured to show that the factory system has effected great social and moral good; it has increased the value of property for every class of men existing in this country, and it has more especially enhanced the value of land. If it has not called into existence, it has called out, the faculties of as fine and noble a race of men as ever

existed in any nation under heaven; and it is because I know the high moral worth of this race that I hopefully view the issue of this present crisis, for I believe that there is a fund of virtue and intelligence in the country sufficient to bear us through any calamities that may be impending.

LETTER XVI

Manchester, Sept., 1842.

HOWEVER gratified my feelings as an author may have been by the speedy and decided testimony which events have borne to the accuracy of the views set forth in the preceding pages respecting the political and social condition of the operatives of Lancashire, I am far from wishing to appear before the public in the character of Calchas, and to be known merely as "a prophet of evil." My second visit to these districts arose from no proud satisfaction in seeing the fulfilment of my prediction, but from a desire to examine over again those statements which had been either doubted or impugned, and to repay the kindness of criticism by prompt attention to its suggestions. So much favourable notice has been bestowed upon this work by journals of every political party, that its subject has gained a public importance which it was far beyond the author's powers to bestow; and it has thus become his duty to retract whatever further examination had proved to be erroneous, and to explain those circumstances which previous inquiries had left doubtful or imperfect.

* Added to Second Edition.

Present circumstances seem to favour such a renewal of investigation: not only public attention, but public anxiety, is painfully directed to the manufacturing districts; and in them the existing agitation has brought all the dangerous elements of society to the surface. Much that was latent has become prominent, and much has been revealed in full-grown strength of which the very existence was not suspected. The movement itself is a phenomenon without a parallel in the history of nations, and it is not very easy to discover any name by which its nature could be adequately described. Some years ago, the labour of months was wasted in endeavouring to trace the origin of a very destructive fire; rewards were freely offered for any information which might lead to the detection of the incendiaries; and all the idle scribes of the metropolis overwhelmed the public journals and the magisterial offices with clever contrivances for detecting the contrivers of such ruin: it was at last proved indisputably that this fire was a clear case of spontaneous combustion. It is rather easier to comprehend a fire originating without an incendiary, than an extensive and simultaneous movement taking place without any previous plot or concert. Indeed, a conflagration would very justly be attributed to incendiary contrivance if the flames had burst forth at the same moment from the most distant and widely-separated parts of the building, because it would be difficult to conceive that inflammable materials should

be at once so extensively spread and so grossly neglected. The evidence of contrivance, both in insurrection and conflagration, would appear strongest to those who viewed both from a distance; for what may be called "spontaneity" is an attribute that can only be discovered by close and careful examination. Moreover, we so rarely find any disturbances at once spontaneous and simultaneous, that it is not easy to comprehend the co-existence of the two attributes; it was therefore natural that so wide-spread a movement should at once be attributed to a plot, and, consequently, that exertions should be made to discover the plotters. It would have been rather a more logical mode of proceeding to have established the fact of a conspiracy before any search was made for the conspirators; but a season of excitement is not the most favourable to close reasoning, especially when previous controversy has heated the passions.

The origin of the movement can now be traced with tolerable certainty. The distress and destitution described in my preceding letters have not been diminished; on the contrary, they have become worse, and have crept into localities which were before comparatively secure. The dissatisfaction produced by that distress has increased still more rapidly, on account of the increasing demands on the different clubs and unions formed to relieve operatives "on the tramp" in search of work. Places where employment has continued tolerably steady were naturally the most in-

viting to the unemployed; and the tales which they related produced much alarm among those who had only felt a small proportion of the general deterioration, together with no unreasonable apprehensions that their turn would come next. The falling feel more real misery than the fallen, for the latter have at least the consolation that they know the worst. On the other hand, the former are unable to enjoy their existing comforts because they feel them to be precarious, and because in the present instance they have hourly before their eyes examples of the sad result in which the deteriorating process must end. To such men, in times like the present, any reduction of wages, however small in amount or equitable in itself, must necessarily seem like the beginning of that "worsening" which would finally reduce the factory operatives to the miserable condition of the hand-loom weavers. For many months there has been a tacit determination among the operatives to make a stand against any further reduction of wages, and a general feeling amongst many of the masters, and nearly the entire class of shopkeepers, that the remuneration for skill and labour was already inadequate.

Nearly at the same time notices of reduction were given at iron-works in Staffordshire and at a factory in Staleybridge; in neither case was the notice wholly unexpected; the state of the markets had, to some extent, prepared the men for what was coming, and they at once had recourse to their ancient remedy—a "strike." The peril of such a step was sufficiently

obvious; the amount of unemployed and starving operatives is so great, that a master whose mills were deserted to-day could, without the least difficulty, fill them up to-morrow, if the labour-market was left freely open to employers. It is also clear that the cessation of labour in any one of the cotton districts would necessarily cause a transfer of employment and demand to the districts where men continued to work, and therefore that the strike would be absolute ruin to its originators if they did not make it universal. The resolutions to desist from work and to compel others to desist from work were taken at the same moment, and they were extensively adopted, because dissatisfaction among the employed operatives is very general, and because the vast masses of the unemployed are ready to take part in any movement, and aid in effecting any change, convinced that no alteration in their condition can by any possibility be for the worse.

It is one of the evils of this day that men are spoken of as classes or masses rather than as individuals. I have been accused of "blarneying" the manufacturers because I showed the absurdity of the calumnies which have been directed against their general body; perhaps I may now be convicted of libelling them when I assert that the complaints of the operatives who took a part in this movement appear in some particular instances to have rested on reasonable, or at least plausible grounds. It was very justly stated in one of the placards posted in Man-

chester, that "there are unreasonable masters as well as unreasonable men." The question of wages interests two parties; it is equally the concern of the employed and the employers, and is a fair subject for discussion between them. To announce a reduction of wages to the operative without a word of apology or explanation, but with a simple

"Hoc volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas,"

is a proceeding unnecessarily harsh, and not easily reconciled with the principles either of prudence or justice. At this very hour there are masters who refuse to have any conference with their men on this subject, and this I cannot but regard as a mode of procedure that is needlessly irritating and exasperating. On the other hand, I have found that every master who understands the principles which regulate the rate of wages is not only ready but anxious to discuss the subject with his workpeople, and to settle matters in a free conference. But wages are not the only nor the most annoying point in issue; many of the men loudly complain that they receive far less than their nominal rate of wages in consequence of the abatements which are made for real or pretended imperfections of work. While some masters boldly challenge investigation on this head, there are others who denounce as iniquitous any inquiry into such statements. From whatever cause free conference and discussion between master and men may be re-

fused, I hold the refusal to be unjust in itself, and very injurious in its consequences.

The original demand of the "Turn-outs" was "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work;" and no man in his senses can say that this claims more than that to which the operative is fairly entitled. But there still remains some little difficulty; we are at a loss to know who is to settle the amount of "a fair day's wages;" and, when it is settled, we have still further to inquire out of what fund and by what hands it is to be paid. This difficulty was early felt by the "Turn-outs," and, as they were not prepared with a satisfactory solution, they adopted that which was ready-made for them, and which was sufficiently unintelligible to hide its absurdity,—they resolved to demand "the Charter." The reasoning which led them to this course was thus stated to me by several of themselves:—"If we compelled our masters to take the list we have prepared now, they would begin again to drop wages in a fortnight: we must have an act of parliament to prevent the lowering of wages; and as such an act could not be expected from the parliament as now constituted, we saw that we must go for the Charter." From this statement, which I have verified by repeated and very varied inquiries, it will be seen that the Charter, with a large proportion of the "Turn-outs," was valued, not for any of its inherent merits, but for its supposed bearing on the question of wages.

The Chartists, having once got their favourite project afloat, attempted to take the entire direction of the movement, and they thus introduced an element of discord which rendered it impossible that the movement should continue and prosper. To the first demand, "a fair day's wages," the middle classes, particularly the shopkeepers, gave their hearty concurrence; the operatives are their best customers, and diminished wages would obviously lead to diminished sales: but it was far different when the cry for the "Charter" was raised; in that they had no sympathy, but, on the contrary, they were much opposed to it from their just dislike and suspicion of the persons who have at various times put themselves forward as Chartist leaders. The majority of the better class of operatives resisted the adoption of the Charter-cry; in Stockport it was rejected by a majority of five to one: and the following very remarkable letter was written by an operative to one of the clerical fanatics who have joined the Chartist agitation. The person to whom the letter is addressed was one of the "blanketeers" or fanatical revolutionists, who in Hunt's time attempted to march upon London with no other provision for the journey than the blankets in which they intended to sleep on the way. The writer of the letter is "a dresser," that is, a person employed to put the dressing of paste, &c., on warp-yarn previous to its being put into the loom. To prevent any doubts of the genuineness of

a letter which I would be proud to have invented, I retain, and am ready to show, the copy in his own hand-writing, which the author gave me in the presence of Mr. Cobden. Independent of its merits as a piece of reasoning, it deserves to be very carefully weighed as an evidence of the talent and intelligence possessed by the operatives of Lancashire. I have not ventured to alter a single word or expression; and I may add that the conversation of this clever operative is not one whit less intelligent than his letter.

To the Rev. Joseph Harrison.

Sir,—I am astonished to find you taking so conspicuous a part in the present absurd movement for the people's Charter. To suppose the Charter can be made the law of the land by these lawless proceedings is monstrously absurd: to represent that the great body of the working classes is favourable to such a movement is unjust, because untrue. It is true the great body of the working classes, and many of the middle and some of the higher classes, are for the Charter; but they are for getting it in the proper and only way it can be got, namely, through the constituencies, the electoral body; and the movement, under the guidance of Joseph Sturge, Esq., is a safe and certain way of securing the Charter. The Charter is right, and ought to be the law of the land, and I believe will be. Now, Sir, I am still more astonished that you should

lend yourself to the deception now being practised upon the working people in this movement. You know, as well as I know, that the strike was for wages; that they left their employ to obtain an immediate good by an advance of wages, and not a distant good by the adoption of the Charter. Only consider the dreadful mischief being produced by this deception which you countenance! How many thousands at this day are pining for want of bread in consequence of the lawless proceedings of the basest faction that ever trod on God's earth, namely, the Chartist faction, and their leaders the Buckingham bullies; but for whom they (the working classes) would now, I believe, be at their employ upon better wages! Now, I ask, why agitate the Charter in Stockport, seeing the electors have returned two representatives who are willing to give the Charter? And, moreover, what is the Charter as applied to existing circumstances? Is it a remedy for the distress? No. If adopted, can it protect labour? No. As a remedy for the distress, and a protection for labour, it is a mere humbug. The remedy for the distress is, extended markets, open the channels of commerce, give the working man the right and the power to exchange his labour at the best market, whether at home or abroad—then he is sure to obtain a day's wages for a day's work, but not till then. With respect to the protection of labour by the adoption of the Charter, a greater absurdity could not be. Sup-

ply and demand regulates the value of labour just the same as the value of a load of potatoes. Neither acts of parliament nor mob law can raise or protect the value of labour. By the way, I wish to mention another absurdity, which you countenance by your signature as chairman, which is, that the "working men are the producers of all wealth." Science produces more wealth than labour; an Arkwright, a Watt, or a Radcliffe, each creates more wealth than ten thousand labourers. Give the man who labours with his hands his due, but no more. Do not fill him up with self and vain conceit, as if the whole creation were in his hands. No; show him that science, or in other words improvements, better his condition; that the reason he is so degraded and distressed is in consequence of an obstructed market—in consequence of a law that compels him to labour for the luxuries of the rich, but forbids him to labour for the necessaries and comforts of life for himself and family. Tell him that the rights of industry are more sacred and more beneficial than the right to vote; that having a vote for a member of parliament will no more fill his belly than having a vote for a common-councilman, unless the rights of industry can be secured. Now, Sir, I wish you to consider the position in which we are placed—a suspension of labour for perhaps half a million of people, a great portion of the population in a state of revolt, which if persisted in must certainly and shortly lead to great destruction; that,

notwithstanding the parrot cry of "Peace, Law, and Order," there is none such thing. We are now at the mercy of a mob, and, if the movements of such mobs be misdirected by masters who are in pursuit of a "Will o' the Wisp," an awful responsibility will rest upon the heads of such. That you may see your error in the course you have taken in this movement is the wish of yours respectfully,

GEORGE WOOD.

The example of the operatives of Stockport in rejecting the Charter was followed by the factory turn-outs of Ashton, Duckenfield, and Staleybridge, but the Chartists brought in such multitudes of the unemployed from the surrounding neighbourhood that the vote for the rejection of the Charter was reversed. Had *all* the masters taken advantage of this crisis to hold a free conference with the operatives, the whole affair would have been at an end, but some of the masters were just as perverse in one course as the Chartists in the other, and the precious opportunity of adjustment was allowed to pass by.

I am no great lover of the Chartist leaders, but I am bound in honesty to vindicate them from the charge of having originated the recent disturbances. In fact, every outbreak in Lancashire for the last fifty years can be distinctly traced to distress, arising from scarcity of employment, and consequently of food. Old Radicalism and modern Chartism are nothing

more than the indistinct cries of natural suffering. Such a thing as an insurrection for an abstract idea was never seen in any country under heaven. Englishmen especially are too practical to be carried away by such abstractions as theories of government; in Lancashire the cry for the Charter means the list of wages for 1836, and in Staffordshire, among the colliers, it means "four shillings a-day." These and similar cries from a population should be regarded by their rulers as similar to the cries of children—indications of suffering from those who feel pain without any precise knowledge of its cause or cure. They are a summons for the state-doctor to interfere lest the patient should apply to quacks.

From 1834 to 1836, when trade was prosperous and wages high, it was impossible to get up any political agitation in the manufacturing districts. I doubt if that prince of agitators, Daniel O'Connell himself, could have collected an audience; and Feargus O'Connor's congregation would scarcely have gone beyond "dearly-beloved Roger." A curious instance of the apathetic feeling which then prevailed respecting public affairs was mentioned to me by Mr. Cobden, as having occurred to him when he made his first public appearance as the future candidate for Stockport. He had been previously known by his writings on many important political questions, and had made a very remarkable speech at a public dinner given by the mayor of Stockport; and, so far as public opinion

could be known, it appeared to be very decidedly in his favour. The meeting was purposely called for the evening in order to give the working classes an opportunity of attending, and the usual steps were taken to attract an audience. The meeting was held in a room calculated to accommodate about three hundred persons; but when the chair was taken, to the great mortification of those engaged in getting it up, it was only half filled. At that meeting an old Radical agitator of the Hunt school, and, I believe, one of the "blanketeers," named John Hamer, mounted the table; and, after the fashion of those preachers who lecture the attendants at church for the delinquencies of the absentees, he bitterly rebuked those who were present for being so few in number, addressing them in the following style, and indeed almost in these very words:—

"Ay, ay, I see how it is with you all: you 're too well to do to care aught for politics now: you 're getting too much *brass* in your pockets every Saturday night to mind a fig about anything but your bellies. Oh! I'm ashamed of you, for you 're all turned Tories; but let me tell you how it will be by and bye, when bad times come again. Why, then, you won't know your friends from your enemies: you 'll be kicking at anybody that's nearest to you."

The latter part of the prediction has been sadly and singularly verified in the course of the long suffering and consequent political agitation of the northern operatives.

As yet the Charter means employment and food, at least with the vast majority; but there are those who wish it to mean confusion, confiscation, and bloodshed, to whom continued stagnation of trade, consequent depression of wages, and scarcity both of employment and food, may prove very efficient and formidable allies. The good sense of the Lancashire operatives rejected the perilous interpretation, and threw the Charter itself overboard, when it was likely to be perverted into such significance. In fact, politics had originally nothing to say to the movement: they were taken up in the midst of it, found to be injurious, and speedily abandoned.

Of all the extraordinary charges ever made against a body of public men, far the most astounding was that which charged the originating of these commotions on the Anti-Corn-Law League. If there be any persons who could believe that the masters instigated the men to demand an increase of wages for the mere pleasure of paying the advanced rate out of their own pockets, they must have a far higher opinion of the liberality and self-sacrifice of the cotton-manufacturers than I ever entertained of them. Besides, if the League had any share in the movement, their mismanagement was so glaring as fully to qualify them for Bedlam; for all the leading orators who took a share in the tumultuous assemblies denounced the Leaguers, collectively and individually, in the most unmeasured terms; nor from first to last is there any recorded attempt to turn the agitation into an anti-

corn-law channel. I know not what will be the next claim made upon public credulity, but nothing can exceed the requiring us to believe that men entered into a conspiracy to take money out of their own pockets, to procure calumnies against their own characters, denunciations of their own persons, and the defeat of their own objects!

The origin of the movement is in fact apparent on its surface; it was commenced by those who feared suffering; and was swelled by the vast tide of those who are actually suffering. There was no plot, or else the object of the struggle would have never varied, and consequently there could be no plotters. By rather a bold personification, indeed, Want of Employment, Distress, and Famine, may be described as the conspirators; and I believe that few will object to *their* being sentenced to transportation.

LETTER XVII.*

Manchester, Sept., 1842.

THE exemplary conduct of the operatives reverencing law when their enterprises were most lawless, and the preserving of order when their proceedings were most disorderly, gave a novel aspect to the late commotions in Lancashire, which, however gratifying as a proof of the progress of morality and intelligence among the people, is not without a startling significance as a result from a consciousness both of strength and justice. There never was a commotion of such extent and duration in which so little mischief was done to person or property. The only acts of violence committed, and even these were few, arose from the resistance made to the stopping of the mills; no depredations were committed on property, no injury was done to machinery, and the very appearance of disrespect to station or authority was avoided. The Mayor of Manchester has publicly stated that in no single instance were the proclamations and precepts of the magistrates disobeyed. To describe such a movement as an *insurrection* is a gross abuse of terms; there was no organization in the moving masses, no

* Added to Second Edition.

recognised leader, no unity in the demands made, and no fixedness in the objects proposed. Tens of thousands turned out, and then began to discuss what it was that they wanted. In most of the crowds there appeared rather the fun and frolic of truant school-boys than the earnestness of persons engaged in a conflict with law; in fact, the whole affair had much more the aspect of a holiday than a riot.

Unprovoked violence offered to such collections of men, women, and children would have been an act of doubtful legality and still more doubtful prudence. The movement was a social confusion, and no doubt perilous to society; but so long as its professed object was confined to the question of wages, it had nothing in its purposes opposed to law and order, though the means employed were such as required to be restrained.

The forbearance and good temper of the civil and military authorities in most places were not less exemplary than the abstinence of the multitude. I know that this moderation has been blamed; I have heard some persons regret that the multitudes were not dispersed at the point of the bayonet or mowed down by musketry; but, if the feelings of common humanity did not show that such severities ought only to be used in cases of the most urgent necessity, prudence must have dictated that the repression of the outward signs of discontent by violent means does not destroy the internal sense of wrong, but leaves it to

rankle in the breast, and to generate that revenge which has been well described as "the wild justice of the hopeless."

Illogical and foolish as the late movement was, no one can doubt that the discontent by which it was produced was perfectly reasonable. The operative has a right to demand "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work." The turn-outs were as clearly right in the end they sought as they were clearly wrong in the means they employed. Until they fell into the error of mixing up the wage-question with the folly of the Charter, they carried with them the sympathies of the great bulk of the middle class and of no small portion of the higher ranks. The result has been, that the question of wages has now forced itself on public attention, and there can be little doubt that the discussions to which it must give rise will soon render the matter "level to the meanest capacities." A great step in advance has been already gained; men have discovered that the amount of wages must be regulated by the amount of employment, and by nothing else. That there are some, both among masters and men, who have a glimmering notion that legislative enactments have something or other, they know not what, to say to the matter, is I fear too true. Indeed a similar blunder is frequently made respecting rents, for both in England and Ireland, farmers may be found urging the necessity of a law to prevent landlords from exacting too much for their ground.

The error arises from not perceiving that everything which is bought and sold—everything for which money is paid in exchange—is a marketable commodity and subject to the laws of the market.

> Now what's the worth of anything,
> But just so much as it will bring?

It is impossible to compel men to buy, and it is equally hopeless to force men to sell. Supposing that a law were passed, or a firm combination formed, to coerce manufacturers into paying a higher rate of wages than their profits will afford, it is obvious that such a law would be injurious and unjust unless accompanied by another to compel purchasers not to pay less than a certain rate for the manufactured goods. Wages must be paid either out of profit or out of capital, and, if paid out of capital, an exhausting process is commenced which will soon annihilate the manufacturer, and prevent him from paying any wages whatever.

It is easy to raise a clamour against manufacturers for reducing wages, and to speak as if by doing so they had voluntarily inflicted a wrong upon their workmen. But, in all fairness, and, indeed, according to the plainest dictates of common sense, the manufacturer must regulate his outlay by his returns, or he must make up his mind to bankruptcy. Now, let us inquire whether the depreciation of the manufacturers' profits has not been such as amply to justify the lowering of wages. In 1835 a 27⅞-inch

72 printing cloth sold from 9*s.* 6*d.* to 9*s.* 9*d.*; the price recently was from 4*s.* 9*d.* to 5*s.* I could add some other examples not less striking, but there is some difficulty in determining what is the actual per centage of depreciation on manufactured goods, because allowances must be made for variations in the price of the raw material, and for the greater cheapness of production, arising from improvements in machinery. A more safe element of comparison is the market-value of mill property, and that, unquestionably, has fallen from 30 to 50 per cent. since 1836. The depreciation of wages, so far as I can calculate, has been from 15 to 20 per cent.; and that wages have been in many cases paid out of capital is clear from the ruin which has overtaken nearly all the small manufacturers and some of the great ones.

In most trades the money-rate of wages is so obviously regulated by demand and supply that a child can comprehend the matter; but machinery introduces some difficulties into the question which are not always taken into account by those who discuss the subject. Those who are paid by the piece, as spinners, dressers, &c., may be enabled by machinery to earn a greater amount per week though paid at a lower rate per piece. Let us take the example of a mule-spinner, whose frames turn only 300 spindles. It is evident that he, if paid at the rate of 6*d.* per pound, will earn less than a mule-spinner whose frames turn 600 spindles receiving only 4*d.* per pound for

the yarn produced. Differences of this kind, though not perhaps of such an amount, are rife in the manufacturing districts, and hence arises the proverb now universal in Lancashire, "The better the machinery is, the higher the wages will be."

Wages cannot be permanently increased without a continual expansion of markets, because every year that passes over our head witnesses a new accession to the population; that is, increases the number of competitors for employment in the labour-market. How are these men to be employed? No one will engage them to produce goods unless there be a market in which the goods produced can be remuneratively sold; and that market is the most effectually closed against us in which we are prohibited from taking the only payment that our customers have to offer. It is evident that there can be no wages where there is no employment, and that there can be no active employment where there is not an active consumption of the articles produced.

The operatives were quite right in denouncing the depreciation of wages during the recent disturbances as a national grievance. They have only to go one step farther, and inquire—by whom wages have been depreciated? The shopkeepers and dairy-farmers, whose business depended on the supply of commodities to the operative population, had good reason for their sympathy with the operatives. Stockport is a convincing proof that the business of the middle classes

suffers severely when the value of labour is depreciated. I have been accused of overstating the decay of Stockport, and I may therefore be excused for digressing so far as to insert the following plain facts, derived from the Chairman of the Board of Guardians to the Stockport Union. The poor-rates this year will be 10*s.* in the pound; three years ago they were but 1*s.* 8*d.*; that 1*s.* 8*d.* rate produced over 5000*l.*, the last 2*s.* rate produced only 3600*l.* In the principal street of Stockport there are 45 shops untenanted, and rather more than one-fourth of the population has disappeared from the place. The question of wages will henceforth occupy the attention of the operative, to the exclusion of the Charter, which will henceforth be regarded as a mockery and a by-word. An able writer, in the 'North of England Review,' very justly says, "In truth, nothing is more remarkable than the feebleness and incapacity of the Chartist body, under circumstances which certainly held out to them a chance of success far superior to any which is likely again to befall them. With the great body of the operatives in open combination against their employers —with the minds of the people alienated almost equally from the government and the middle classes—under the excitement of accumulating privations and still more alarming prospects—with all the stimulants to folly supplied by idleness and hunger, they were unable to make a single move in advance; and even among their chosen representatives were found, to use

their own words, 'hesitation, weakness, want of confidence, and indecision, together with a total deficiency in the courage, the energy, and the determination so essentially necessary to the carrying out of their objects.' The 'Northern Star' itself seemed utterly ignorant what course to recommend, and foresaw that the event 'would have a great tendency to dispirit the people, to damp their ardour in the movement, and to throw seriously back the Charter agitation;' and even the affectionate adjurations of Mr. Feargus O'Connor failed in producing any effect, though he besought the people, 'if he had any weight with them, and if his name had not lost its wonted charm, to foster the opportunity which faction had given them to accomplish their Charter.'

"This utter prostration of Chartist influence will, we trust, be attended with beneficial results. The working people must now be convinced how utterly powerless they are by themselves to relieve their present distresses, still more to work out their political redemption. They must begin to doubt the infallibility of those who teach them to look with distrust upon the efforts now made to abolish commercial restrictions; and finally, tracing effects to their causes, they will, we doubt not, discover that 'the unjust and inhuman corn-law is the main cause of the evils which affect the industrial community, destroying the profits of manufacturers, reducing the wages of the working men, and bringing beggary and ruin upon a large

portion of our countrymen;' while all classes must be convinced that 'there can be no guarantee for the peace of society, or for the security of life and property, whilst large masses of the people are sinking into a state of abject destitution.'"

POSTSCRIPT.

London, Sept. 1842.

SINCE my return to town I have been very often asked, "Has the insurrection in Lancashire been suppressed?" My answer is, that there was no insurrection to suppress, but, what is far more difficult, that there was a social commotion to tranquillise—an object which has not been effected. The operatives indeed are returning to their work almost invariably without effecting their object, an advance of wages, but more impatient than ever to better their condition, and more convinced than before that they have been visited with unmerited wrong and suffering. The manifestations of discontent have become less ostentatious, but the discontent and dissatisfaction have taken a deeper hold of the minds of all the working classes from Birmingham to Aberdeen. God only knows what the next move may be. Inflammable materials are spread everywhere; "*Incedimus per ignes cineri suppositos doloso.*" The operatives are disappointed at the result of their late proceedings, but they certainly are not daunted; on the contrary,

they boast of the great strength they displayed and the sympathy they met in almost every direction. They say, and I believe with truth, that the order and moral discipline which they observed in their proceedings have won for them a larger share of the confidence and respect of the middle classes than they ever possessed before; and they aver, with perfect truth, that many of the masters recognise the justice of their demands, and would concede them if they could. It must be remembered that the question at issue is a question of wages, that it still remains unsettled, and that it is not of a nature to be settled either by musketry or artillery. It is easy to say, Let the masters pay the men; but there remains the question *How* are they to pay their men without an improvement and extension in the demand for manufactures? Some improvement, indeed, appears to have taken place, and we may hope that it will be permanent; but, unless the markets of America be thrown open to us—unless our manufacturers are empowered to take the payment proffered by the thousands who are pining to become purchasers—I fear that the present improvement may be a transitory gleam of sunshine which will aggravate existing distress by the bitterness of disappointed hope. The demand made by the operatives is based on the principles of eternal justice; the divine mandate which doomed man to labour declared that his industry should produce him the means of support. "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread;" the

food was promised when the toil was commanded; and the operative does no more than obey the behests of Omnipotence when he claims "A FAIR DAY'S WAGES FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK."

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